



F 293



# *Matrimonial Ceremonies Displayed :*

WHEREIN ARE EXHIBITED THE VARIOUS CUSTOMS, ODD PRANKS,  
WHIMSICAL TRICKS AND SURPRISING PRACTICES OF NEAR  
ONE HUNDRED DIFFERENT KINGDOMS AND PEOPLE  
IN THE WORLD, NOW USED IN THE CELEBRATION  
AND CONSUMMATION OF MATRIMONY,

COLLECTED FROM THE PAPERS OF

## *A Rambling Batchelor ;*

With a Variety of Remarks by him, Serious and Humorous.

TO WHICH IS ADDED THE COMICAL

### ADVENTURES OF SIR HARRY FITZGERALD,

Who had Seven Wives, with the Character of each,—  
a Genuine Story.

*Also an Epigram on Matrimony, in Latin and English.*

—

Published for the Information and Entertainment of the Ladies  
and Pretty Girls of Great Britain, not forgetting those  
of Dublin and Tipperary.

**London :**

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1880.





## THE PREFACE.

*FEW authors agree in the definition of Matrimony. Charron calls it a wise bargain, a state, or an honourable conjunction; some more malicious critics call it a yoke, a communion of evils and punishment, a society of cares and troubles. But without adhering to the sentiments of the one, or the differing opinions of others that criticise upon it, I shall define Matrimony according to the Canonists, to be a Sacred Union of Man and Woman, not to be dissolved but by the Death of one of them. Matrimonium est viri et mulieris conjunctio individuum vitæ societatem continens.*

*This is the first and most ancient state, owing its institution to the supreme Author of Nature; and for the greater consequence, because it is the foundation of human society, the original of families, and of kingdoms. Prima societas est in conjugio, quod principium urbis, feminarium republicæ.*

*Marriage is not solemnized in the same manner everywhere, but the rules and laws of marriages are more or less strict, according to the diversity of religion and nations. Among the Christians they are the most strict, when the greatest part of other religions, to make marriages more free, easy and fruitful, allow polygamy and divorce. Yet, among all the different laws and customs in the world, there is no nation so barbarous as not to solemnize marriage with some rites, ceremonies, and public rejoicings.*

*Manufactured in the United States of America*  
*Bound for THE MODERN LIBRARY by H. Wolff*

**T**HE present is in every age merely the shifting point at which past and future meet, and we can have no quarrel with either. There can be no world without traditions; neither can there be any life without movement. As Heracleitus knew at the outset of modern philosophy, we cannot bathe twice in the same stream, though, as we know to-day, the stream still flows in an unending circle. There is never a moment when the new dawn is not breaking over the earth, and never a moment when the sunset ceases to die. It is well to greet serenely even the first glimmer of the dawn when we see it, not hastening towards it with undue speed, nor leaving the sunset without gratitude for the dying light that once was dawn.

In the moral world we are ourselves the light-bearers, and the cosmic process is in us made flesh. For a brief space it is granted to us, if we will, to enlighten the darkness that surrounds our path. As in the ancient torch-race, which seemed to Lucretius to be the symbol of all life, we press forward torch in hand along the course. Soon from behind comes the runner who will outpace us. All our skill lies in giving into his hand the living torch, bright and unflickering, as we ourselves disappear in the darkness.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.



## PREFACE

FROM our earliest days we look out into the world with wide-eyed amazement, trying to discover for ourselves what it is like. Instinctively we must spend a great part of our lives in searching and probing into the nature and drift of the things among which, by a volition not our own, we were projected. To-day, when we stand, as it were, at the beginning of a new era, and when we have been celebrating the centenary of the most significant event in modern history, an individual who, for his own guidance, has done his part in this searching and probing, may perhaps be allowed to present some of the results, not claiming to be an expert, not desiring to impose on others any private scheme of the universe. The pulse of life runs strong and fast; I have tried to bring a sensitive lever to that pulse here and there, to determine and record, as delicately as I could, its rhythms: the papers I now present might be called a bundle of sphygmographic tracings.

A large part of one's investigations into the spirit of one's time must be made through the medium of literary personalities. I have se-

lected five such typical individuals; it is the intimate thought and secret emotions of such men that become the common property of after generations.

Whenever a great literary personality comes before us with these imperative claims, it is our business to discover or divine its fundamental instincts; we ought to do this with the same austerity and keen-eyed penetration as, if we were wise, we should exercise in choosing the comrades of our daily life. He poses well in public; he has said those brave words on the platform; he has written those rows of eloquent books—but what (one asks oneself) is all that to me? I want to get at the motive forces at work in the man; to know what his intimate companions thought of him; how he acted in the affairs of every day, and in the great crises of his life; the fashion of his face and form, the tones of his voice. How he desired to appear is of little importance; I can perhaps learn all that it imports me to know from a single involuntary gesture, or one glance into his eyes.

This is the attitude in which I have recorded, as impersonally as may be, these impressions of the world of to-day, as revealed in certain significant personalities; by searching and proving all things, to grip the earth with firmer foothold.

H. E.

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# **THE NEW SPIRIT**



# THE NEW SPIRIT

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE is a memorable period in the history of Europe which we call the Renaissance. We do well to give preëminence to that large efflorescence of latent life, but we forget sometimes that there have been many such new expansions of the human spirit since that primitive outburst of Christianity which is the most interesting of all in modern times. The tree of life is always in bloom somewhere, if we only know where to look. What a great forgotten renascence that is which in the middle of the twelfth century centers around the name of Abelard! It was nothing less than the new birth of the intellect. Abelard had made anew the discovery that reason, too, is the gift of God, and faith was no longer blind; from all Europe thousands of students gathered around the great teacher who dwelt in his rough hermitage on the desert plains of Troyes. It was in the strength of that feast that men wove scholastic cobwebs so diligently that the human spirit itself seemed for awhile suffocated. It was a great renascence of life,

a hundred years later, in the wonderful thirteenth century, when Francis of Assisi revealed anew in his own person the ideal charm of Jesus, and a group of fine spirits, his fellows, who bore the Everlasting Gospel,—Jean de Parme, Pierre d'Olive, Fra Dolcino and the rest,—sought to rebuild the edifice of Christendom on the foundation of the Gospels, only in the end to deluge the world with a plague of gray friars. And then a great wave, with Luther on its crest, swept across Europe, reached at last the coast of England, and left on its shores, as a dreary monumental symbol, St. Paul's Cathedral. There is another great vital expansion about the time of the French Revolution. Since then, and chiefly as a result of that final triumph of the middle-class throughout Europe, of which the French Revolution was the decisive seal, the energy of Europe, and of England especially, has found its main outlets in the development of a huge commercial structure, now, in the opinion of many, slowly and fearfully toppling down. The nineteenth century has seen the rise and fall of middle-class supremacy. What has been the result of it?

One naturally turns first to literature to see the reflection of the life of a period. The man who seems in the eyes of all Englishmen, so far as one can make out, to have represented during this century the claims of humanity, of dignity, of what is called the spiritual side of

life, was Carlyle; and Carlyle has been likened again and again to the Joels and Jeremiahs of that most material Hebrew race. The whole of his long day was spent in crying out to a faithless and perverse generation. Therefore Carlyle never attained the serenity and hilarity of those two great spirits, Goethe and Emerson, between whom he stood midway. Nor is it surprising that he was often blinded by the smoke and heat of a land that had become one huge Black Country, and that he fought against freedom, and sometimes mistook his friends for enemies. Nor again is it surprising that of the two great poets who occupy the center of the century, one found inspiration in the blunders of a Crimean war and the royal representative of respectable middle-class chivalry, while the other gave himself up to marvelous feats of psychological gymnastic. Matthew Arnold, for his part, resolved the discords of his time in the austere calm of Stoicism; the calm of souls

"who weigh  
Life well and find it wanting, nor deplore;  
But in disdainful silence turn away,  
Stand mute, self-centered, stern, and dream no  
more."

practically, however, Arnold found it necessary neither to turn away nor to be silent. There was yet another solution for sensitive souls: to hide the heart in a nest of roses away

from the world, just as Schopenhauer, who in Germany represented in more philosophic vesture this same vague unrest, resolved it by the aid of his profound religious sense in refined and æsthetic joy. That is the solution sought in what seems to me one of the most exquisite and significant books of the century, "Marius the Epicurean." For Marius, life is made up of a few rare and lovely visions. All the rough sorrow and gladness of the world, its Dantesque bitterness or its Rabelaisian joy, only reaches him through a long succession of mirrors, and every strong human impulse as an attenuated echo. This serious, sweet, and thoughtful book is the summary of the "sensations and ideas" of the finest natures of an era; as in certain of the distinguished opium-eaters of the beginning of the century, Coleridge or De Quincey, we see a refined development of the passive sensory sides of the human organism with corresponding atrophy of the motor sides. It is clearly impossible to go any farther on that road.

There is no renaissance of the human spirit unless some mighty leverage has been at work long previously. Such forces work underground, slowly and coarsely and patiently, during barren periods, and they meet with much contempt as destructive of man's finer and higher nature; but, in the end, it is by these that the finer and higher is lifted to new levels. No great spiritual eruption can take place

without the aid of such levers. What forces have been at work during the century that is now drawing to a close? Three, I think, stand clearly forth.

At the end of the sixteenth century, it was above all the sudden expansion of the world that inspired human effort and aspiration. In later days science has carried on the same movement by revealing world within world. A chief element in the spirit of the French Revolution was, as Taine pointed out, that scientific activity which centered around Newton. In our own time the impulse has come from scientific discoveries much more revolutionary, far-reaching, and relative to life, than any of Newton's. The conception of evolution has penetrated every department of organic science, especially where it touches man. Darwin personally, to whom belongs the chief place of honor in the triumph of a movement which began with Aristotle, has been a transforming power by virtue of his method and spirit, his immense patience, his keen observation, his modesty and allegiance to truth; no one has done so much to make science—that is to say, all inquiry into the traceable causes or relations of things—so attractive. The great and growing sciences of to-day are the sciences of man—anthropology, sociology, whatever we like to call them, including also that special and older development, now become a new thing, though still retaining its antiquated name of Political



Economy. It is difficult for us to-day to enter into the state of mind of those who once termed this the dismal science; if the question of a man's right to a foothold on the earth is not interesting, what things are interesting? Our hopes for the evolution of man, and our most indispensable guide, are bound up with all that we can learn of man's past and all that we can measure of his present. It was by a significant coincidence that that great modern science which has man himself for its subject was created by Broca, when he founded the Société d'Anthropologie of Paris in the same memorable year of 1859 which first saw "The Origin of Species." Man has been brought into a line with the rest of life; a mysterious chasm has been filled up; a few fruitful hints have been received which help to make the development of all life more intelligible. This has, on the one hand, given a mighty impulse to the patient study of nature and to the accumulation of facts now seen to bear such infinite possibilities of farther advance; just as the discovery of America in the fifteenth century produced a like spirit of adventure which led men to all parts of the globe. On the other hand, this devotion to truth, this instinctive search after the causes of things, has become what may be called a new faith. The fruits of this scientific spirit are sincerity, patience, humility, the love of nature and the love of man. "Wisdom is to speak truth and con-

sciously to act according to nature." So spake the old Ephesian, Heraclitus, to whom, rather than to Socrates, men are now beginning to look back as the exponent of the true Greek spirit; and so also speaks modern science. It is a faith that has become a living reality to many; Clifford, for instance, as revealed in his "Lectures and Essays," has long been a brilliant and inspiring member, often called typical, of the company of those who are filled with the scientific spirit. Huxley, one of the most militant and indefatigable exponents of the scientific spirit during the past half century, has lately set forth its aim, which has been that of his own life:—"To promote the increase of natural knowledge and to forward the application of scientific methods of investigation to all the problems of life to the best of my ability, in the conviction, which has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength, that there is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and of action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is, when the garment of make-believe, by which pious hands have hidden its uglier features, is stripped off." It is important to note that this spirit is becoming widely diffused; it would be easy to point to manifestations in various departments of this open-eyed, sensitive observation, not pretending to know prematurely, ready to throw away all prepossessions and to follow Nature whithersoever her caprices lead,

without crying "Out upon her!" It is impossible to forecast the magnitude of the results that will flow from this growing willingness to search out the facts of things, and to found life upon them, broadly and simply, rather than to shape it to the form of unreasoned and traditional ideals. There was long abroad in the world a curious dread of all attempts to face simply and sincerely the facts of life. This audacious frankness and scarcely less audacious humility aroused horror and suspicion; and those who marched at the front heard with considerable pain many members of the rear black-guard hurling "Materialist!" and other such terms of scorn at their backs. The sting has now died out of these terms. We know that wherever science goes the purifying breath of spring has passed and all things are recreated. We realize that it is, above all, by following the light that is shed by the low and neglected things—the "survivals"—of the world, that the reasonable path of progress becomes clear. We cried for the moon for so many thousand years before we conquered the world. We know at last that it must be among our chief ethical rules to see that we build the lofty structure of human society on the sure and simple foundations of man's organism.

These three great movements are clearly allied, and certainly the practical applications of this scientific spirit, of which there is more to say immediately, will rest very largely in

the hands of women. The great wave of emancipation which is now sweeping across the civilized world means nominally nothing more than that women should have the right to education, freedom to work, and political enfranchisement—nothing in short but the bare ordinary rights of an adult human creature in a civilized democratic state. But many other changes will follow in the train of these very simple and matter-of-fact changes, and it is no wonder that many worthy people look with dread upon the slow invasion by women of all the concerns of life—which are, after all, as much their own concerns as any one's—as nothing less than a new irruption of barbarians. These good people are unquestionably right. The development of women means a reinvigoration as complete as any brought by barbarians to an effete and degenerating civilization. When we turn to those early societies, which are as lamps to us in our social progress, we find that the arts of life are in the possession of women. Therefore when the torch of science is placed in the hands of women we must expect them to use it as a guide with audacious simplicity and directness, because of those instincts for practical life which they have inherited.

The rise of women—who form the majority of the race in most civilized countries—to their fair share of power, is certain. Whether one looks at it with hope or with despair one

has to recognize it. For my own part I find it an unfailing source of hope. One cannot help feeling that along the purely masculine line no striking social advance is likely to be made. Men are idealists, in search of wealth usually, sometimes of artistic visions; they have little capacity for social organization. It is sometimes said that the fundamental inferiority of women is shown by the very few surpassing women of genius in the world's history. In their anxiety to combat this argument women have even enlisted Semiramis and Dido into their ranks. But it is a fact. For all great solitary and artistic achievements—the writing of Divine Comedies, the painting of Transfigurations, the construction of systems of metaphysic, the inauguration of new religions—men are without rivals; the more abstract and unsocial an art is, the easier it is for men to attain eminence in it; in music and in the art of erecting philosophies men have had, least of all, any occasion to fear the rivalry of women. Such things are precious, although it may be that what we call “genius” is something abnormal and distorted, like those centers of irritation which result in the pearls we likewise count so precious. Women are comparatively free from “genius.” Yet it might probably be maintained that the average level of women's intelligence is fully equal to that of men's. Compare the men and women among settlers in the Australian bush, or wherever else men

and women have been set side by side to construct their social life as best they may, and it will often be to the disadvantage of the men. In practical and social life—even perhaps, though this is yet doubtful, in science—women will have nothing to fear. The most important mental sexual difference lies in the relative and absolute preponderance in women of the lower, that is, the more important and fundamental nervous centers.<sup>1</sup> What new forms the influence of women will give to society we cannot tell. Our most strenuous efforts will be needed to see to it that women gain the wider experience of life, the larger education in the full sense of the word, the entire freedom of development, without which their vast power of interference in social organization might have disastrous as well as happy results. -

We most of us began in youth with literature; the seeds of art and imagination found a kindly soil in childhood and puberty; and we spent our enthusiasm on Scott or Shelley, on Gautier or Swinburne. As we grew older we tired of these, developing instincts that craved other satisfaction, discovering sometimes even that our idols had clay feet. Then we turned to the things that had seemed to us before so dull and stupid that we had scarcely looked at them; we began to be fascinated by economics

<sup>1</sup>The detailed analysis of the elements which women, by the facts of their constitution, must bring to the organization of life, cannot be entered into in this volume. I hope to deal with it in part elsewhere.

and the growth of society, the problem of surplus value turns out to be full of attraction, and the historic development of the relationship between men and women as charming as any novel. In the same way the men of 1859, who were nurtured on "The Origin of Species," naturally and rightly turned their militant energies against theology and fought over the book of Genesis. To-day, when social rather than theological questions seem to be the legitimate outcome of the scientific spirit, and when all things connected with social organization have become the matters of most vital interest to those who are really alive to the time in which they live, even in youth such questions begin to grow enchanting, and those who are older feel the same fascination; the man who shared with Darwin the honor of initiating a new scientific era becomes a land nationalizer, William Morris a socialist, and the poet laureate who sixty years earlier had sung fantastic poems of a coming Utopia grasps at length the concrete problems with which we have to deal. All this is hopeful, for we have scarcely yet got to the bottom of the questions raised by the growth of democracy.

The influence of science on life is an accomplished fact, and we can distinctly trace its gradual development; the influence of women is on the eve of attaining its outward consummation, and it is not altogether impossible to forecast some of the changes which it will in-

volve. But the influence of democracy, more talked of than either of the others, is much more vague, complex, and uncertain. Once it was thought that we had but to give a vote to every adult—outside the asylum and perhaps the prison—and democracy would be achieved. This crude notion has long since become ridiculous. We see now that the vote and the ballot-box do not make the voter free from even external pressure; and, which is of much more consequence, they do not necessarily free him from his own slavish instincts. We see that enfranchisement does not mean freedom, since the enfranchised are capable of running in a brainless and compact mob after any man who is clever enough to gain despotic influence over them. This is not democracy, though it is doubtless a step towards it. If we test the intelligence of the enfranchised by examining the persons whom they elect as their representatives, we soon realize the trifling character of the step. Even the free and generously democratic colonies of Australia show few brilliant results by this test. It is hard to get rid of the old distinction between a governing class and a governed, and to recognize that every man must be a member of the government.

If democracy means a state in which every man shall be a freeman, neither in economic nor intellectual nor moral subjection, two processes at least are needed to render democracy possible—on the one hand a large and many-



sided education; on the other the reasonable organization of life.

The conception of education has within recent times undergone a curious development. Some of us can still remember the time when the word "education" meant as a matter of course the rudiments of intellectual education only, and when such education was regarded as a panacea for many evils; this kind of education has, in consequence, we may take it, been virtually secured to every child in all civilized countries. To this kind of education, however, it is no longer possible to attribute any satisfying sort of virtue. It may produce a very inferior order of clerk; but *education*—the reasonable development of the individual—it cannot deserve to be called; it merely puts a certain rude intellectual instrument into the hands of a still thoroughly uneducated person. Education, as we understand it now, must be founded on the harmonious exercise of body, senses, and emotions, as well as intellect; the whole environment is the agent of education. That is why we are now extending the meaning of the word indefinitely. Fresh air, good food, manual training, the cultivation of the art instincts, physical exercise and abundant recreation, wholesome home relationships—these are a few of the things which we now recognize as essential parts of the rational education of every boy and girl, and which we are seeking to obtain for all. Nor is education in this sense

incompatible with intellectual development; on the contrary, it is the only sound foundation for such development. There is here no need for fear. We seem, indeed, to be rapidly approaching a period in which the excessive intension of knowledge, its confinement to a few persons, will give way to a marked extension of knowledge. Such a process is in the lines of our democratic advance. It is for the advantage of the men of science who have paid for the seclusion of extreme specialism by incapacity to understand popular movements and popular needs; it is to the advantage of all that there should be no impassable gulf between those who know and those who are ignorant. It is well to sacrifice much, if we may thereby help to diffuse the best things that are known and thought in the world, and make the scientific attitude, even more than scientific results, a common possession.

It is clear that education thus understood leads directly to the other great factor of democracy. Education is impossible without social organization: no advanced stage of social organization is possible without a complex and diffused education; they lead up to each other and go hand in hand. The average working man, in England at all events, is not an enthusiast for schemes of technical education; as things stand, such schemes constitute a method for supplying the capitalist with cheap instruments, and the working man cannot be expected

to view with enthusiasm his own depreciation in the market. At the same time his lack of education leads him to overrate the value of a tawdry intellectual equipment, and he views with little anxiety the growth of a race of inferior clerks, for whom the world has few uses.

In England the love of independent individual initiative and the dislike of all harmonious social organization is certainly stronger than elsewhere; it is intimately associated with the best and worst qualities of the race, and it has spread over all the countries we have overrun. For three hundred years this tendency has had a free field. But during the last fifty years a new instinct of social organization has been slowly developing and gaining strength. Trades unions have been one of the most potent influences in this direction. All our factory legislation has been a sign of its growth, and the same movement has given enthusiasm to the County Council. There are very few things in our daily life which this spirit of social organization is not embracing or promising to embrace. The old bugbear of "State interference" (a real danger under so many circumstances) vanishes when a community approaches the point at which the individual himself becomes the State. It might be added that under no circumstances could the temper of the English people tolerate any considerable amount of "State interference." The com-

munalization of certain social functions corresponds—without being an exact analogy—to the process by which physiological actions become automatic. As it becomes a State function commerce will cease to absorb the best energy and enterprise of the world, and will become merely mechanical.

It may not be out of place to point out that while this process of socialization is rapidly developing, individual development so far from stopping, is progressing no less rapidly. It is too often forgotten that the former is but the means to secure the latter. While we are socializing all those things of which all have equal common need, we are more and more tending to leave to the individual the control of those things which in our complex civilization constitute individuality. We socialize what we call our physical life in order that we may attain greater freedom for what we call our spiritual life.

The growth of social organization is now beginning to open up possibilities which a few years ago would have seemed Utopian. It cannot remain limited within merely national bounds. It is concerned with the things of which all have a common need, and the interests of nations are here inextricably intertwined. This must sooner or later result in the formation of international tribunals, and this again will have decisive results in relation to war—a method of dispute rapidly becoming antiquated.

Twenty-eight millions of men, ready to be put into the field (is not this a suggestive euphemism?) at a moment's notice, in a corner of the world! Take a *plébiscite* of the adult population of Europe, of whose life-blood these twenty-eight millions are, to-morrow—and what would the *régime* of militarism be worth? We must certainly expect to see the same process repeated between nations which has everywhere taken place among individuals. When a strong power to which appeal can be made is established, individuals cease to fight and become litigants; this was seen in the Middle Ages, and again, as Maine pointed out, when a strong British executive was established in India. As soon as a sufficiently strong tribunal is formed, nations who once went to war must in the same way become litigants. This again will have its reaction on democracy and social life.

Along another line we may observe the approaching disappearance of war. The wars of modern times have, to a large extent, had commercial causes at their roots. The downfall of unrestricted competition, and the organization of industrialism, will remove this cause of war. In the profoundly interesting movement, witnessed to-day in the direction of trusts and syndicates, we see the natural and inevitable transition to a new era. Like all transitions, it can only be effected with much friction. From one point of view it is the last barricade of

capitalism; from a wider stand-point it is the forging of a huge instrument to be taken up eventually by a vast international community who will thus control the means of providing for themselves by methods of simple and uneventful routine.

Before international organization can be realized there seems little doubt that a period of protective national organization must intervene. At present there is a floating population of the weakest and less capable—unable to emigrate to a new country—always flowing from a poorer country into a less poor country, and bearing with them the seeds of vagrancy and crime. No progress is possible if every little redeemed patch is at once flooded from over sea. It must be remembered also, that the dykes necessary to regulate the floating population are required even in the interests of the poorer countries. We are approaching a time when the general spread of information, it impossible for any country to tolerate the fact that the general level of its people's existence should exceed in wretchedness that of any other nation. The evolution of a better state especially by means of newspapers, will render can only take place by the pressure resulting from the presence of these outcast elements of society. To reject them is but to disguise the condition of a nation and to imperil its destiny.

The destiny and fate of nations has always fascinated the popular imagination, and the

destinies of nations are now shaping themselves before our eyes with singular clearness. Within a measurable period of time France will have become a beautiful dream; all Frenchmen will be Belgians or Italians, the races which have already in large measure taken possession of the country; it is a process which Frenchmen themselves observe and chronicle with painful interest. But France has already accomplished a great work among the nations. Of wider significance is the development of Russia. For various reasons the position of Russia is peculiar. The youngest of European nations in civilization, with a strong Asiatic element by position and race, Russia is approaching the task of social organization with a different endowment from that possessed by any other nation. This racial endowment, while imparting a curious freshness to its methods of dealing with European problems, especially fits it for its great mission of dominating Asia. To the English it has never been easy to find a *modus vivendi* with lower races, or races which we are pleased to consider lower; the very qualities which give us insular independence and toughness of fiber, unfit us for the other task. But the Russian temperament, as is now generally recognized, is peculiarly adapted for mingling harmoniously even with the fiercest yellow races and bringing them into relation with the best European influences; all those who care for humanity view with satisfaction the grow-

ing influence of Russia in the East, an influence which, we may reasonably hope, will overspread the continent. A very large field indeed is still left for the other great expanding race of the world. The English-speaking races have in their hands the greater part of North America, and nearly all Australia, and here their special qualities find ample scope. This division gives no ground for quarrel; the Russians have never had much capacity for emigration in the English sense, and the English are beginning to learn by bitter experience that they are not suited for the mission of civilizing Asia; the Spanish races have, as a field for their renaissance, now so rapidly taking place, nearly the whole of the rich continent of South America; while those slow, yet tenacious and admirable colonists, the Germans, will be able to gain ground in that African continent to which they are most attracted, and which was long ago claimed by the Dutch for this division of the Teutonic race. If we English are certain to make little progress where, as in Asia, the great task is conciliation, when it is a question of stamping out a lower race—then is our time! It has to be done; it is quite clear that the fragile Red men of America and the strange wild Blacks of Australia must perish at the touch of the White man. On the whole we stamp them out as mercifully as may be, supplying our victims liberally with missionaries and blankets.



speaking race. Everywhere, for those who have been born in the colonies, England is a remote land of glamour and tradition, a land of sacred associations and strange old-world customs, and the most radical colonist is a conservative where the old country is concerned. Every one who has lived in the colonies has come upon this attitude of sentiment, perhaps with a shock of surprise; nor is it easy at once for a prosaic Londoner to realize the feelings of the man who arrives for the first time in the land of his fathers and beholds Fenchurch Street and Cheapside through an atmosphere of old romance. Yet this emotional attitude will develop mightily with the development of English-speaking nations, and will but be strengthened by the dying down of England's political and commercial activity. Every country must succumb at last, but to succumb to its own children is a happier fate than ever befell any great country of old.

It has been necessary to take this brief survey of the influences that are now modifying the face of the civilized world, for it is in this theater and under these conditions that the three great modern forces that we shall meet with throughout this book are acting. What impresses one is the vast resonance which now accompanies every human achievement, because of the communalization and extension of the methods of intercourse. It has become one of the chief tasks of science to attain unity, unity

of standard and measure and nomenclature; this has been the object of numberless conferences. It is to attain this end that the efforts to manufacture a universal language have obtained some support, fruitless as they have hitherto been. It was by a wholesome instinct that men formerly clung to Latin as the universal language of educated Christendom; the humanizing intercourse which by means of a common language broke through the barriers of race, forms one of the most charming features of the early Middle Ages. The equally wholesome instinct of individual development has intervened; but the other again becomes dominant, and the universal language becomes more and more inevitable every day. Around it will center the chief struggle and the chief triumph of the scientific spirit.

The very splendor and inevitable impetus of these modern movements is producing, here and there among us, a reasonable reaction, a reaction against the hurry and excitement of modern life. And yet, perhaps, less a reaction than their natural outcome and development.

It is by art and religion that men have always sought rest. Art is a world of man's own making, in which he finds harmonious development, a development that satisfies because framed to the measuring-rod of his most delicate senses. Religion is the anodyne cup—indeed of our own blood—at which we slake our thirst when our hearts are torn by personal misery, or weary

and distracted by life's heat and restless hurry. At times, the great motor instincts of our nature, impelling us by a force that we cannot measure or control, cause us to break up our dainty house of art, or to dash down bravely the cup of healing. But we shall always return to them again; they, too, represent an instinct at the root of our being. In the recognition of this harmony lies the secret of wise living.

Religion is hidden by many a strange garment, but its heart is the same, and built firmly into the human structure. The old mystic spoke truly when he defined God as an unutterable sigh. Now and again we must draw a deep breath of relief—and that is religion. That no intellectual belief or opinion is necessarily bound up with religion, it is nowadays unnecessary to show. To how many has Schopenhauer—an indifferent philosopher, but a great master of the secrets of religion—brought from afar, into the light of the modern world, the mysteries of the soul that seeks for consolation? A weary and distracted creature, at war even with himself, he was of those for whom the Kingdom of Heaven is especially made; he sought and found, and molded into the sweet harmonies of his prose, the things that make for rest and for consolation—and who is not sometimes weary and distracted, and in need of rest? We English, it is true, are not an aboriginally religious people; we are great in practical life, and we are marvelous

poets; but while we have an immense appetite for imported religion, we have never ourselves even produced one of those manuals of piety which, since the days of Lâo-tsze, have become the common possession of the devout everywhere. One little Encheiridion alone there is, so far as I know, in which, during recent years, an English writer has brought echoes of old times, of exhilaration or of peace, into forms which enable the children of to-day to be at one with those of former days. "Quid nobis cum generibus et speciebus?" asked the author of the "Imitation." Hugo de St. Victor was driven to religion by the barrenness of dialectics: "Truth cannot be discovered by ratiocination," he said; "it is by what he *is* that man finds truth." To-day, Edward Carpenter escapes from the burden of science to find joy for awhile in the perennial fountain which springs up within, and which the measuring-rod of science has never meted. "Towards Democracy" has a quality of its own, which many have tasted with delight, and which will probably give it place with those sources of joy known to few, but well loved of those few.

For religion is a mystery, into which not all of us are initiated. The road to the Kingdom of Heaven, as it was well said of old time, is narrow, and blessed are they who, having reached it, stay but a little while! To drink deep of that cup is to have all the motor energies of life paralyzed. Art remains to give us

the same joy and refreshment, in more various, wholesome, and acceptable forms. For art is nothing less than the world as we ourselves make it, the world re-molded nearer to the heart's desire. In this construction of a world around us, in harmonious response to all our senses, we have at once a healthy exercise for our motor activities, and the restful satisfaction of our sensory needs. Art, as no mere passive hyperæsthesia to external impressions, or exclusive absorption in a single sense, but as a many-sided and active delight in the wholeness of things, is the great restorer of health and rest to the energies distracted by our turbulent modern movements. Thus understood, it has the firmest of scientific foundations; it is but the reasonable satisfaction of the instinctive cravings of the organism, cravings that are not the less real for being often unconscious. Its satisfaction means the presence of joy in our daily life, and joy is the prime tonic of life. It is the gratification of the art-instinct that makes the wholesome stimulation of labor joyous; it is in the gratification of the art-instinct that repose becomes joyous. The fanatical commercialism that has filled so much of our century made art impossible—so impossible that beyond one or two voices, raised to hysterical scream, no one dared to protest against it. The satisfaction of the art-instinct is now one of the most pressing of social needs. In England, William Morris probably stands first among

**those who have perceived this weighty fact. A man of immense energies and varied activities, one of the greatest modern masters of English speech and poet-craft, an ardent advocate of the most advanced social ideas of his time, he has slowly felt his way to the realization of the truth, that the secret of good living is even economically involved in the communalization of art. Our most glorious dreamer, he has placed this conception at the foundation of his lovely and substantial visions.**

It is true, indeed, that we have already an art in which for the great mass of people to-day our desires and struggles and ideals are faithfully mirrored. The great art of the century has been fiction. It is common, among some writers, to speak contemptuously of novels, but the mass of contemporary fiction has a value that is little realized, and perhaps is not likely to be realized, for some time to come. There is a very large and wonderful and little-read collection of fiction, the "Acta Sanctorum," in which the whole life and soul of a remote period are laid bare to us. It is, like our own fiction, a fiction that is more than half reality, and it has often seemed to me that the novels of this century will in the future be found to have precisely the same value as the "Acta Sanctorum." For the novel is contemporary moral history in a deeper sense than the De Goncourts meant. Many novels of to-day will be found to express the distinctive

features of our age as truly as the distinctive features of another age, its whole inner and outer life, are expressed in Gothic architecture.

William Morris looks back wistfully towards the popular art of the Middle Ages, and deals out scorn to the novel; he is unjust to our modern popular art. Yet, by a wholesome instinct. For fiction is, more than any other art, the art of a period of repression. The world's great ages have never much cared to rehearse themselves in the brooding solitudes that the storyteller demands. Our faces now are turned in another direction.

I have tried to obtain and present here a faint tracing of the evolution of the modern spirit, as it strikes a contemporary. In the subsequent chapters we shall be able to trace it yet more distinctly, at different stages, and in various phases. Diderot, eclipsed once, is seen now, as, in a manifold sense which may be claimed for no other man, the initiator of our own day in all its varied manifestations, and, above all, in its practical scientific spirit. In Heine we see the most characteristic, if not the finest, artist of the second quarter of our century, the melodious embodiment of all its discords, the impersonation of a transition which we have all passed through, and which draws us to him with cords of a peculiarly personal tenderness. Whitman represents, for the first time since Christianity swept over the world, the re-integration, in a sane and whole-hearted

form, of the instincts of the entire man, and therefore he has a significance which we can scarcely over-estimate. Goethe had done something of this in a more artistic and intellectual shape; it is from no lack of love or reverence for Goethe that I have chosen the American, a democrat rather than an aristocrat, the very roughness of whose grasp of life serves but to reveal the genuine instinct of the modern Greek. All that is finest in aristocracy we see revealed in Ibsen, a keen and somber figure that reminds one perpetually of Dante—the same curt and awful contempt for lies and for shams, the same vision of a Heaven beyond. Into such Kingdoms of Heaven it needs but a child to enter, and when I see this man with that little diamond wedge of sincerity and the mighty Thor's hammer of his art, I feel as though no mountain of error could resist the new spirit that he represents. In Tolstoi we see the manifestation of another great modern force; no keenness or clearness here indeed in the interpretation of life, though such a marvelous power of presentation; yet a massive elemental force, groping slowly and incoherently towards the light, so interesting to us because we seem to be conscious of the heart of a whole nation, the great nation of the future, towards which all eyes are turned.

Certainly old things are passing away; not the old ideals only, but even the regret they leave behind is dead, and we are shaping in-



stinctively our new ideals. Yet we are at peace with the past. The streams of hot lava flow forth and cover the world; the lava is but the minute fragments of former life. We marvel at the prodigality of nature, but how marvelous, too, the economy! The old cycles are forever renewed, and it is no paradox that he who would advance can never cling too close to the past. The thing that has been is the thing that will be again; if we realize that, we may avoid many of the disillusionings, miseries, insanities, that forever accompany the throes of new birth. Set your shoulder joyously to the world's wheel: you may spare yourself some unhappiness if, beforehand, you slip the book of *Ecclesiastes* beneath your arm.

## DIDEROT

**O**F the three intellectual heroes of the Revolution, Diderot exercised the least apparent influence; he was, for the most part, too far ahead of his time, and his tremendous energies were frequently either concealed or dissipated along innumerable channels. The humane Voltaire, short-sighted, but so keen within his range, whose sarcasm was always on the side of benevolence; the morbid, wrong-headed, suffering Rousseau, who spent his life in bringing to birth an exquisite emotional thrill which is now a common possession—these two men stood out in the eyes of all, then and long after, as the standard-bearers of revolution. On the other hand, Diderot's great German contemporary, Goethe, the only man with whom he may fairly be compared, has during most part of this century seemed to us the inaugurator of the spiritual activities of the modern world. Goethe is still full of meaning; it will be long before we have exhausted "Wilhelm Meister" or "Faust." Perhaps, now that we are so anxious to reform the world before reforming ourselves, we need more than ever the example of Goethe's self-culture and self-

restraint, of his wise reverence for temperance and harmony. But even Goethe, with that peaceful Weimar atmosphere about him, seems to us a little antique and remote from our modern ways. Diderot, on the other hand, who grew up and lived among the various and turbulent activities of the city that was in his time the focus of European life, appears before us now as a spirit of the latter nineteenth century, at one with our aspirations to-day. It was fitting that his works should wait until our own time for the most adequate and complete publication yet possible, and that he should now first receive full and ungrudging appreciation.<sup>1</sup> "At the distance of some centuries Diderot will appear prodigious; men will look from afar at that universal head with admiration mingled with astonishment, as we to-day look at the heads of Plato and Aristotle." So Rousseau wrote, at the end of his life, of the friend whose unwearying kindness he—almost alone among human beings—had at last wearied out; to-day the prophecy seems in a fair way of fulfillment.

The whole life of Diderot, all his actions and

<sup>1</sup>The handsome edition of Diderot's "Œuvres" in some twenty volumes, edited by Assézat and Tournoux, contains nearly a fourth of previously unpublished material, much of considerable interest. The *centenaire* edition of his "Œuvres Choiesies," comprised in one moderate-sized volume, includes all that most people need read of Diderot's works, and is, on the whole, a most varied and judicious selection, made by such competent editors as Letourneau, Lefèvre, Guyot, Véron, &c. Mr. Morley's well-known work on Diderot and the Encyclopædists has done more than anything else to create an intelligent English interest in the matter.

all his words, everything that he wrote, bears the impress of his ever-flaming enthusiasm. That "air vif, ardent et fou," which, in his own words, marked him in early life, meets us at every turn. As a boy at the Jesuit College he wished to go out into the world. "But what do you wish to be?" asked over and over again that most excellent of fathers, the cutler of Langres. And the young Diderot persisted that he wanted to be nothing: "mais rien, mais rien du tout." He was not the last youth who, feeling the stirring of a deep instinct, would not, and could not, shut himself down to one narrow path of life. But to the men of this stamp "nothing" means "everything." Then ten years passed, ten years, as his daughter wrote, passed "sometimes in good society, sometimes in indifferent, not to say bad, society, given up to work, to pain, to pleasure, to weariness, to want, sometimes intoxicated with gayety, sometimes drowned in bitter reflection." He taught mathematics: if the scholar was apt, he taught him all day; if he was a fool, he left him. "He was paid in books, in furniture, in linen, in money, or not at all." When teaching failed he had to earn money how he could—as by supplying a missionary with a stock of sermons. Once he had to starve for a few days. That was not the least instructive experience to the youth, for he resolved that, whenever he could help it, no fellow-creature should suffer the like.

There could have been no better education. It was the seed-time of all his energies, of his encyclopædic knowledge, of his manifold hold on life, of his extraordinary capacity. He found time in the midst of it to fall in love with and marry a pious, honest, and affectionate girl who happened to be living in a room near him, but who was so ignorant that she once scolded him for the amount (very far from excessive) that he took for his writings; she could not imagine that mere writing could be worth so much. That he was not always faithful to her scarcely needs to be told; that could, perhaps, have been otherwise at no period, least of all in eighteenth-century Paris. There is a deep pathos in the brief story of her long life and her devotion to the husband whose own energies were at the service of any human being, however poor or disreputable, who cared to climb up the stairs to his room. In the early days of poverty she would make little sacrifices to procure a cup of coffee or similar trifling luxury for her husband; and during his last illness, though she would have given her life, her daughter wrote, to make him a Christian, yet realizing how deeply rooted his convictions were, she shielded him from the efforts of the orthodox, and would not leave the parish *curé* alone with him for an instant; at his death, the daughter adds, she "regretted the unhappiness he had caused her as another would have regretted happiness." But we do not regret

unhappiness; it is but another way of saying that life is complex and full of mitigation. In tenderness Diderot was never deficient; he was clearly a man of deep family affection; he seems to have inherited this from his father; so judicious a critic as Sainte-Beuve remarks that of the whole group of *philosophes*—not eminent, perhaps, in this respect—Diderot was the one who “most piously cultivated the relations of father, of son, of brother, and who best felt and practiced family morality,” and we constantly come across traces of this “piety.” He tells us with great glee how, when he was once walking through his native Langres, a townsman came up to him and said, “Monsieur Diderot, you are a good man, but, if you think that you will ever be equal to your father, you are mistaken.” His eldest sister seems to have had something of his own downrightness and solidity; he loves her, he says, not because she is his sister, but because he “likes excellent things.” His only brother was an ecclesiastic and a bigot, but Diderot dwells on the inexhaustible charity by which this rather eccentric man had impoverished himself. At the latter part of his life Diderot’s letters are full of proof of his tender love for his daughter, of the care and thought he devoted to her education, of the gentleness with which he sought to open to her the mysteries of the world.

At the age of twenty-eight Diderot conceived the plan of that “*Encyclopædia*” which became

the central activity of his life. A few years later he published his first work, a free translation of Shaftesbury's "Essay on Merit and Virtue," which indicates well the philosophical point from which he set out. It was followed, a year after, by the "*Pensées Philosophiques*," a few brief pages, full of condensed and vigorous satire on the theologians and of robust faith in man and nature. Perhaps the most memorable is that in which he imagines that a man, betrayed by his wife, his children, his friends, retired into a cavern to meditate some awful revenge against the human race, a perpetual source of dread and misery; at last the misanthrope rushed out of his cavern shouting, "God! God!" and his fatal desire was accomplished: this account of the matter at all events indicates how little, even at this early period of his life, Diderot sympathized with the fashionable Deism of his day. The book was condemned to be burned by command of Parliament, but it was subsequently reënforced by still more audacious additions. So began characteristically, if with something of the reckless impetuosity of youth, a series of writings, far too long even to name here, many that were only published at his death, some that are only now being published, a large number that have probably been lost altogether—all marked by the same prodigious wealth and variety and eloquence. Yet they lie apart from the great work of his life. The "*Encyclopædia*" occu-

pied thirty years; the appearance of the first volume was retarded by Diderot's imprisonment at Vincennes, and it appeared in 1751; the last appeared in 1772. The "Encyclopædia" was more than an encyclopædia; it was not founded on that of Chambers, by which it was suggested, nor is it represented by our own estimable "Encyclopædia Britannica." It was not a simple summary of the knowledge of the time, for the benefit of a community trained to appreciate the value of science. It was in the words of the prospectus, "a general picture of the efforts of the human spirit in every field, in every age." It was the frank and audacious application to the whole of knowledge of new ideas, for the first time loudly proclaimed to a society slowly crumbling to ruin, but still by no means powerless. It was an evangelistic enterprise among infidels, with dangers on every side, and where one holds one's life in one's hands. We may still appreciate the significance of such a struggle. The future in every age belongs to those who can see farther ahead than their fellows, and who fight their way towards the vision that they see; but the risks are equally great under any condition of society, and some sort of Bastille or Vincennes is always at hand.

Diderot was certainly of all men most fitted to organize and uphold this great work and to carry it to triumphal completion. He said once of himself that he belonged to his windy



countryside of Langres; "the man of Langres has a head on his shoulders like the weathercock on the top of the church spire—it is never fixed at one point." He was scarcely just to himself; with all his emotional vivacity and his readiness to receive new impressions, there was in him also an infinite patience and a tenacity to hold on to the end in spite of all. Both his versatility and his patience were called for here. He was indefatigable, for ever animating the waverers, stimulating the slow-paced, fighting with timid publishers, himself having a hand in everything, ever ready to suggest new ideas or to spend months in studying the details of machines or factories, or anything else that had to be done; knowing all the time that at every moment he might be exiled or imprisoned. The personal qualities of the man, even more than his varied abilities, carried him through. Some one speaks of "his eyes on fire and the prophetic air which seemed always announcing the enthusiasm of actual labor"; we hear of his "éloquence fouguese et entraînante"; and, with this, of his feminine sensibility, his wit and tact and fertility of resource. We divine these qualities in his head as it has come down to us, though his characteristics do not easily lend themselves to brush or chisel. He has himself some remarks on this point. In his *Salons* he comes upon his own portrait by Van Loo, and, after some good-humored criticism, he adds: "But what will my grandchildren say when they

come to compare my sad books with that smiling, mincing, effeminate old flirt? My children, I warn you that I am not like that. I had a hundred different faces in one day, according to the thing that affected me. I was calm, sad, dreaming, tender, violent, passionate, enthusiastic, but I was never as you see me there. I had a large forehead, very bright eyes, tolerably large features, a head quite like that of an ancient orator, a *bonhomie* which approached stupidity, and an old-fashioned rusticity. I wear a mask which deceives the artist, whether it is that there are too many things mixed together, or that the mental impressions which trace themselves on my face succeed one another so rapidly that the painter's task becomes more difficult than he expected. I have never been well done except by a poor devil called Garand, who caught me as it happens to a fool who utters a *bon mot*." Meister, Grimm's secretary, who knew Diderot well, says of him: "The artist who would seek an ideal head for Plato or Aristotle could hardly meet a modern head more worth his study than Diderot's. His large forehead, uncovered and slightly rounded, bore the imposing imprint of his large, luminous, and fertile spirit. The great physiognomist, Lavater, thought he detected there some traces of timidity and lack of enterprise, and this intuition, founded only on such portraits as he could see, has always

seemed to me that of a keen observer.<sup>1</sup> His nose was of masculine beauty, the contour of his upper eyelid full of delicacy, the habitual expression of his eyes sensitive and gentle; but when he became excited they gleamed with fire; his mouth revealed an interesting mixture of refinement, of grace, of *bonhomie*; and, whatever indifference there might be about his bearing, there was naturally in the carriage of his head, especially when he began to talk, much energy and dignity. Enthusiasm seemed to have become the most natural attitude of his voice, of his soul, of all his features. When his mental attitude was cold and calm, one might find in him constraint, awkwardness, timidity, even a sort of affectation; he was only truly Diderot, he was only truly himself, when his thoughts transported him beyond himself."

It was the inexhaustible profusion and generosity of Diderot's genius which seems to have impressed men chiefly. A small literary man of the time wrote his impression of Diderot, as he appeared in later life, with what is probably but a very mild touch of good-natured caricature:—"Some time ago I had a desire to write a book. I sought solitude in order to meditate. A friend lent me an apartment in a charming house amid delightful scenery. Hardly had I arrived when I learnt that M. Diderot occupied a room in the same house. I do not exagger-

<sup>1</sup> "Timid and awkward in his own cause," says Meister elsewhere, "he was scarcely ever so in that of others."

ate when I say that my heart beat violently; I forgot all my literary projects, and thought only of seeing the great man whose genius I so much admired. I entered his room with the dawn, and he seemed no more surprised to see me than it. He spared me the trouble of stammering awkwardly the object of my visit. He guessed it apparently by my air of admiration. He spared me likewise the long windings of a conversation which must be led to poetry and prose. Hardly was it mentioned than he rose, fixed his eyes upon me, and, it was quite clear, did not see me at all. He began to speak, at first very low and fast, so that though I was quite close to him I could scarcely hear or follow him. I saw at once that my part in the conversation would be limited to silent admiration, a part which it costs me little to play. Gradually his voice rose and became distinct and sonorous; he had been almost immovable; now his gestures became frequent and animated. He had never seen me before, and when we were standing he put his arms round me; when we were seated he struck my thighs as though they were his own. If the rapid courses of his talk brought in the word 'law,' he made me a plan of legislation; if the word 'theater' came in, he offered me the choice between five or six plans of dramas. *A propos* of the relation between the scene and the dialogue, he recalls that Tacitus is the greatest painter of antiquity, and recites or translates for me the

Annals or the History. But how terrible that the barbarians should have buried in the ruins of architectural masterpieces so many of Tacitus's *chefs-d'œuvre*! Thereupon he grows as tender over those lost beauties as though he had known them. But if the excavations at Herculaneum should reveal fresh Annals and Histories! And this hope transports him with joy. But how often in the process of discovery ignorant hands have destroyed the masterpieces preserved in tombs! And here he dissertates like an Italian engineer on methods of excavation. Then his imagination turns to ancient Italy, and he recalls how the arts of Athens had softened the terrible virtues of the conquerors of the world. He turns to the happy days of Lælius and Scipio, when even the conquered assisted with delight in the triumphs of the conquerors. He acts for me an entire scene of Terence; he almost sings several songs of Horace. He concludes by actually singing a song full of grace and wit, an impromptu of his own at a supper, and recites for me a very agreeable comedy of which, to save the trouble of copying, he has had a single copy printed. Then a number of people entered the room. The noise of chairs makes him break off his enthusiastic monologue. Then he distinguishes me in the midst of the company, and comes up to me as to a person whom one has previously met with pleasure. He reminds me that we have talked about many very interesting things

—law, drama, history; he acknowledges that there was much to be learnt from my conversation, and makes me promise to cultivate an acquaintance the value of which he appreciates. At parting he gives me two kisses on the forehead, and snatches his hand from mine with genuine sorrow." Diderot is recorded to have laughed heartily at this sketch when he saw it in the "Mercure" of 1779: "I must be an eccentric sort of fellow; but is it such a great fault to have preserved amid all the friction of society some vestiges of the angularity of nature?"

These impressions are confirmed by those of the Empress Catherine, whose delicate generosity in buying Diderot's library and appointing him librarian smoothed the last years of his life. She wrote to Mme. Geoffrin: "Your Diderot is an extraordinary man. I emerge from interviews with him with thighs bruised and quite black. I have been obliged to put a table between us to protect myself and my members." He could not understand, his daughter remarks, that one must not behave the same way in a palace as in a barn. It must be added, in justice to Diderot, that Catherine was no lover of ceremony, as she certainly let Diderot know.

He was the same to everybody; not more ready to furnish the Empress with the plan of a university on the largest scale, and in accordance with the most advanced ideas, than to

write laughingly *Avis au public* for a new pomade to promote the luxuriant growth of the hair. He was equally ready to throw out the brilliant suggestions which Helvetius and Holbach worked into their books "De l'Esprit" and the "Système de la Nature," and to assist some poor devil in tatters who, once at least, after he had long fed and clothed him, turned out to be a police spy; he was none the less bountiful to every comer. Now we see him devising ingenious ruses to obtain succor for a nobleman's forsaken mistress; again finding a manager for Voltaire's comedy, the "Dépositaire," or revising Galani's "Dialogues" on the wheat trade. The Dauphin dies; a monument must be erected to him in Sens Cathedral; Diderot is sought out and speedily submits five designs. All the men of talent and all the people in distress found their way to Diderot; dedicatory epistles for needy musicians, plots of comedies for playwrights deficient in invention, prefaces, discourses—no one went away disappointed who climbed up to that fourth-floor door in the corner house of the Rue St. Benoît and the Rue Taranne.

Some of his benevolent schemes were certainly of a rather dubious character; there seems to linger about them a touch of the sanctification of means by ends which we may, if we like, attribute to his Jesuit education. In his comedy, "Est-il bon? Est-il méchant?"—no doubt the best of his plays—he has satirized

himself in the person of the hero, Hardouin, a man who gets into terrible scrapes with his friends from the questionable devices by which he tries to serve them; obtaining, for instance, a pension for a widow lady by pretending that her child is illegitimate, and causing an obdurate mother to acquiesce eagerly in the marriage of her daughter by delicately suggesting that she has already been seduced. We find Diderot carrying on various benevolent little intrigues of this kind when we read his letters to Mlle. Voland.

These letters to Mlle. Voland form the most characteristic and intimately personal record of himself that Diderot left. He was forty years old when the correspondence began, and it lasted for more than twenty years. Of Sophie Voland almost nothing is known; we only catch glimpses of her as a woman of wide sympathies and decided intelligence, neither very young nor pretty, and wearing spectacles; she lived with her family, who were clearly more orthodox and conventional than herself, and must not, as Diderot frequently hints, see everything that he writes. Of the depth and reality of his affection for her there is no doubt; his editors have discussed the question as to whether this affection was throughout of the nature of friendship only, or whether, according to the phrase of Sainte-Beuve, an hour's passion had served as the golden key to the most precious and intimate secrets of friendship. This may be as



it will; Diderot had found some one in whose presence he could show himself, without reserve or precaution, on every side of his manifold nature, and he was always tenderly grateful to the woman who had procured him this sweetest of pleasures. "My Sophie is both man and woman," he wrote to her, "when she pleases;" as such he always addressed her, pouring out recklessly all that happened to be in his head, narrating the incidents of the day, telling what he was thinking about or projecting, repeating current scandal or sometimes not quite decent story, flashing instinctively into wise or witty reflection; always with a swift, almost unconscious pen, forgetting now and again what he has already said. It is only in these letters, where he is, as he says, "rendering an account of all the moments of a life that belongs to you," that we realize the personal charm, the exuberant strength and at the same time the weakness of the man who in the midst of his manifold energies bursts out: "A delicious repose, a sweet book to read, a walk in some open and solitary spot, a conversation in which one discloses all one's heart, a strong emotion that brings the tears to one's eyes and makes the heart beat faster, whether it comes of some tale of generous action or of a sentiment of tenderness, of health, of gayety, of liberty, of indolence—there is the true happiness, nor shall I ever know any other."

The "Encyclopædia" seems to us to-day but

a small portion of the achievement of Diderot's life, though it represents the part that he played in relation to the science of his time. His place in science has sometimes been wrongly stated. It has been said, for instance, that he anticipated Lamarck and Darwin. It is true that he wrote, "The need produces the organ; the organization determines the function," and that this contains the germ of Lamarck's doctrine; and again, "The world is the abode of the strong," and that this may be said to be the germ of the doctrine of natural selection; but at both points he was simply putting into epigrammatic form the conceptions of the greatest scientific genius of his age and country, Buffon, the only man of that time who was cast in the same massive mold, and to whom Diderot could turn with fraternal delight and admiration. It is to Buffon also, and not to Diderot, that the honor of anticipating Lyell belongs. It is in his Baconian thoughts on the interpretation of nature, and again in such a comprehensive collection of data as his notes on physiology, discovered of recent years, that Diderot's searching and inquisitive scientific spirit appears. He frequently startles us by the way in which he vividly realizes and follows out to their legitimate conclusions those floating ideas of his time which we are working out today. Above all, and from the first, he clearly grasps the fundamental value of the human body and its processes in the interpretation of mental

phenomena; in one of his comparatively early works, the "Lettre sur les Aveugles," he remarks that he has never doubted that "our most purely intellectual ideas are closely related to the conformation of our bodies." "How difficult it is," he says elsewhere, "to be a good philosopher and a good moralist without being anatomist, naturalist, physiologist, and doctor." Holding firmly by this clew, he was constantly trying to fathom the mysteries of the soul and to picture the processes of life; it is because he has realized that this can only be done fruitfully from the physiological side that the "Rêve de d'Alembert," his most brilliant effort in this direction, is interesting after the lapse of a century.

He brought the same eager, impressionable spirit to his novels and stories. It is indeed no great step from "Le Rêve de d'Alembert" to "Le Neveu de Rameau," and from that to "La Religieuse." Whatever he undertook he carried out with the whole energy and enthusiasm of his nature, and while this takes from the artistic symmetry of his work, it adds to its vitality and significance. It is owing to this quality that "Les Bijoux Indiscrets," a frivolous novel in the style of the younger Crebillon, pointless and indecent, written, at the age of thirty-five, mainly to obtain money for his mistress, Mme. de Puisieux, contains passages which have been considered among the finest he ever wrote, and by its reflections on the reform of the theater,

its criticisms of manners, and philosophical insight served avowedly as the point of departure for Lessing's famous "Dramaturgie." It was not until he read Richardson that Diderot produced any very noteworthy work in fiction; his admiration for the English novelist was extreme, but certainly not out of proportion to Richardson's historic importance. Richardson not only marks the first real landmark in the evolution of the English novel; he is the point of departure of the modern French novel, and Diderot, more than any one else, helped to make his influence felt in France. Very soon after falling under the spell of the great English story-teller and writing his "Eloge de Richardson," Diderot produced his most famous novel, "La Religieuse." It is clear how much Richardson influenced the minute study, in autobiographic form, of the life and sufferings of a young girl forced into a convent with its uncongenial atmosphere and petty persecutions. It was a distinct artistic achievement, the more remarkable as it was certainly intended as an attack on the small vices of a community of women isolated from the world. Even those parts of this attack which have been considered questionable are always in the tone of the unsuspecting young girl who writes them, and only become offensive when a modern editor removes them in order to substitute asterisks; compare these passages with the more ostentatious propriety and zeal for virtue of a mod-

ern Parisian in "Mademoiselle Giraud ma Femme." A year later Diderot wrote an unquestionable artistic masterpiece, only preserved for us by a happy chance, "Le Neveu de Rameau," a dialogue of unfailing spirit between himself and a strange social parasite whom he is analyzing. Some years later he fell under the influence of Sterne; "Jacques le Fataliste," so attractive to Goethe and many others, was the result. But he had no great affinity for the sinuous humor of Sterne, and, while he threw himself into it with his usual energy, the result, though Shandean enough, is less happy than his great Richardson effort. Yet "Jacques le Fataliste" contains the "Histoire de Mme. de la Pommeraye," and this little *histoire*, when disentangled from the manifold episodes which interrupt the hostess of the inn who tells it, is Diderot's most perfect and most characteristic effort as a story-teller. Even in his novels it is the directness and the veracity of his scientific spirit, united to his emotional impressionability, which gives significance to his work.

The same features mark his plays, though here the result has ceased to be pleasing, and we may be permitted to-day not to read through the "Fils Naturel" and the "Père de Famille." Yet we must not forget that from them is dated the modern drama, with the notes of sincerity and simple realism, peculiar then to Diderot, which nowadays have become a more common

possession. Diderot's dramas produced a great and immediate effect in Germany, on Goethe and Schiller as well as on Iffland and Kotzebue, and the "Père de Famille" was translated by Lessing.

As a critic of the stage Diderot has, perhaps, attracted exaggerated attention, though he has not escaped misunderstanding, most people's knowledge of his opinions on this head beginning and ending with the "Paradoxe sur le Comédien." Diderot at first attributed, as from the nature of his temperament he was sure to do, the chief part in acting to emotion and sensibility; in time he outgrew this youthful opinion, and in the "Paradoxe" he emphasized as strongly as he could the part of study and reflection in the actor's art, a part which must always be of the first importance, notwithstanding all the tears shed by charming actresses, and carefully bottled for controversial purposes. Diderot was far too sane and many-sided to see only one aspect of so complex an art as the actor's; it is, as he says, "study, reflection, passion, sensibility, the true imitation of nature," which go to make up good acting. An interesting and too brief series of letters to Mlle. Jodin is well worth reading from this point of view. Mlle. Jodin, the daughter of an old friend of his, was a rather wild and impetuous young lady of some talent who had suddenly adopted the life of an actress. Diderot performed many small services both for

her and her mother, and wrote letters full of wise and, it appears, much-needed counsel as to her conduct both on and off the stage. "Mademoiselle," he writes, "there is nothing good in this world but that which is true; be true, then, on the stage, true off the stage. . . . An actor who has nothing but sense and judgment is cold; one who has nothing but *verve* and sensibility is mad. It is a certain temperament of mingled good sense and warmth which makes men sublime; on the stage and in the world he who shows more than he feels makes us laugh instead of touching us."

Diderot inaugurated modern art criticism by the notices of the pictures in the Salon, which he wrote during many years for "Grimm's Correspondence." One cannot help regretting that he was not born among a greater group of artists. Chardin we still esteem, and Greuze is at the height of his popularity, but it is difficult to take more than an antiquarian interest in Boucher, and who cares now for Louthembourg or Van Loo? Even before Joseph Vernet, whose variety, freshness, and love of nature appealed so strongly to Diderot, it sometimes requires an effort to be sympathetic. Diderot now and then criticizes with severity—as occasionally when he is dealing with Boucher—but the tone of his criticism, as generally happens with contemporary criticism, seems to us to-day pitched altogether too high. In one respect, at all events, it is unlike most old appreciations of

now neglected pictures; it is generally delightful to read, perhaps sometimes more delightful than the picture can ever have seemed. One suspects that Diderot treated pictures like books; Holbach, having read a book he had warmly recommended, came to him to say that the book contained nothing of which he had spoken. "Well," replied Diderot, "if it wasn't there it ought to have been there."

Everything that Diderot touched he vitalized. There were few things that he left untouched. There were very few roads of modern life on which he was not an enthusiastic and often audacious pioneer. He seems to have known instinctively the things that we are laboriously learning. So it is with politics, sexual morality, various social and politico-economical questions, education, philosophy. He touched all the social questions which absorb our attention to-day. He approached the problem of the place of the workers in society in the same temper in which we approach it to-day, and the practical knowledge of industries and industrial life which he had obtained in order to write some of his most remarkable articles in the "Encyclopædia" gave him some right to be heard.

His views on education, chiefly expressed in the "Plan d'une Université pour le Gouvernement de Russie," are on a level with the most advanced views to-day. The education he demands is free and compulsory, and he is in favor



of giving children free meals at school. He censures classical teaching, advocates professional education and instruction in the natural sciences, "the study of things rather than the study of words." "I think," he says, "that we should give in our schools something of all the knowledge necessary to a citizen, from legislation to the mechanical arts, and in these mechanical arts I include the occupations of the lowest class of citizens. The spectacle of human industry is in itself large and satisfying, and it is good to know the different ways in which each contributes to the advantages of society. This kind of knowledge is attractive to children, who are naturally inquisitive." Certainly, from more than one point of view, such an element in education would have an important social significance.

Of the functions and position of women—in most countries, he remarks, that of idiot children—he speaks often, shrewdly indeed, yet with peculiar sympathy. The most important expression of his opinions on sexual morality is contained in the "*Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*." Bougainville, the first Frenchman to sail round the world, had visited the lovely island of Tahiti, and brought back a strange and vivid picture of the idyllic innocence and frank license that existed there. Diderot was aroused to set forth his views on sexual questions with that union of fiery enthusiasm, uncompromising thoroughness, and saving

grace of humorous good sense which always characterizes him. He imagines a dialogue between the chaplain of Bougainville's expedition and Orou, a Tahitian, who is anxious to know why the chaplain refuses to conform to the customs of the country. The worthy chaplain represents the morality of civilized Europe, and Orou, with a few questions concerning this morality, easily succeeds in confounding him and in pouring keen ridicule on the inconsistencies of European morals. With reference to rules of conduct which vary with the country and the time, Diderot makes Orou say, "We must have a surer rule, and what shall this rule be? Do you know any other than the good of the community and the advantage of the individual?" "You were unhappy," he remarks again to the chaplain, "when I presented to you last night my two daughters and my wife; you exclaimed, 'But my religion! my office!' Do you wish to know what in every time and place is good and bad? Concern yourself with the nature of things and of actions, and with your relations to your fellows. Consider the influence of your conduct on yourself and on the community. You are mad if you think that there is anything in the universe, above or below, which can add to or take from the laws of nature." That rule, he explains, is the polar star on the path of life, and the invention of crimes, punishments, and remorse will only obscure it. "In founding morality on the

relationships which must always exist between men, the religious law becomes perhaps superfluous; and the civil law should only be the enunciation of the law of nature, which we bear engraved on our hearts, and which must always be the strongest." At the end Diderot intervenes with a counsel of moderation and practical wisdom: "What shall we do, then? We will protest against foolish laws until they are reformed: meanwhile we will submit. He who by his private authority breaks a bad law, authorizes others to break good laws. There is less inconvenience in being mad with the mad than in being wise by oneself. Let us say to ourselves, let us proclaim incessantly, that shame, punishment, and ignominy have been attached to actions which in themselves are innocent. But do not let us commit them; for shame, punishment, and ignominy are themselves the worst of evils."

"Every century has its own spirit; that of ours seems to be liberty." So in 1776, when men were beginning to say that it was time to burn philosophers instead of their books, and a boy of eighteen was actually burned, Diderot wrote to Voltaire, in the famous letter in which he announced that in spite of all he would stay in Paris, among the enemies of liberty, to carry on his own mission. Timidity in political matters was excusable in Diderot's day, and existed even among the men of his own set. Helvetius, for instance, advocated the advan-

tages of paternal government and benevolent despotism; with his usual keen and vigorous good sense, Diderot shows how unreal these advantages are. When we give a ruler absolute power to do good, we cannot prevent him assuming also an absolute power to do evil. Moreover, as Diderot insisted, it is not possible to make people good against their wills, nor is it desirable to treat men like sheep. "If they say, 'We are well enough here,' or if, even, they say, 'We are not well here, but we will stay,' let us try to enlighten them, to undeceive them, to bring them to saner views by persuasion, but never by force." "The arbitrary government of a just and enlightened prince is always bad." He insists, again and again, that we must never let our pretended masters do good to us against our wills. "Whenever you see the sovereign authority in a country extending beyond the region of police, you may say that that country is badly governed." Diderot, Goethe, Adam Smith, Beccaria, Mill, to mention but a few typical names, threw all the weight of their influence, sometimes with passionate emphasis, on the side of individuality and freedom, and their teaching reached its final consecration when Darwin accepted as his central theory the fruitful idea of Malthus. They felt, and rightly felt, that they were taking the step that was most needed. Those who advocated solidarity and social coöperation mostly went to the wall. Now it is the turn of the social

instincts, and we must expect them to work themselves out to the utmost. We have to see to it that the truth to which Diderot and the rest fought their way is not meanwhile lost. The general will is itself to-day in danger of becoming a benevolent despotism, and perhaps the time will never arrive when such warnings as these will be quite out of date. When it is a question of the oppression of our fellows, we cannot always afford to wait until the offender listens to the voice of persuasion; him, at least, we must bring within "the region of police": beyond that lies danger.

'Et si j'ai quelque volonté,  
C'est que chacun fasse la sienne."

So Diderot wrote in some impromptu verses at a convivial gathering over which he once presided; it was a summary of his views on many matters. "I am convinced," he wrote, "that there can be no true happiness for the human race except in a social state in which there is neither king nor magistrate, nor priest nor laws, nor *meum* nor *tuum*, nor property in goods or land, nor vices nor virtues." This is the anarchism that stands at the end of all social progress, but as an attainable social state it is still certainly, as Diderot adds, "diablement idéal." He had no faith in moralization by Act of Parliament. "There will then be prostitutes? — Assuredly. — Mistresses? — Why not?—Girls seduced?—I expect there

will.—Husbands and wives not always faithful?—I fear so. But at least," he adds, "I shall be spared all those vices which misery, luxury, and poverty produce. The rest may be as it will be."

Diderot's robust faith in nature, that finest fruit of the scientific spirit, comes out again and again, here and elsewhere. "The evil-doer is one whom we must destroy, not punish": that is the great truth, held by a large number of the foremost men to-day, which is not even yet accepted. "Never to repent and never to reproach others: these are the first steps to wisdom." And, again: "In the best and most happily constituted man there remains always much of the animal; before becoming a misanthrope, consider whether you have the right." Not many men have had so much reason as Diderot for becoming misanthropic; few men have had in them less of the misanthrope. "My life is not stolen from me," he writes; "I give it. . . . A pleasure which is for myself alone touches me slightly. It is for myself and for my friends that I read, that I reflect, that I write, that I meditate, that I hear, that I observe, that I feel. . . . I have consecrated to them the use of all my senses, and that is perhaps the reason why everything is a little enriched in my imagination and conversation; sometimes they reproach me, ungrateful as they are. Ungrateful! would I could make hundreds ungrateful every day!" He never seems

to waver in his faith in men, nor in the determination, with which, indeed, that faith must ever be bound up, to look every fact of nature squarely in the face. The words with which his letters to Sophie Voland close seem to be the constant refrain throughout all his work: "There is nothing good in this world but that which is true."

It cannot be said that Diderot performed any one great and paramount achievement. The most brilliant of his fragments—the "Rêve de d'Alembert" or "Le Neveu de Rameau"—is but a magnificent improvisation. He made no memorable contribution to our knowledge of the world. Nor was his genius of what may be called the wedge-shaped order—the genius of the man who, with every nerve strained to the solution of one mystery, never rests until the heart of it is cloven. His genius was essentially fermentative. He knew by a native instinct every promising germ of thought, and he knew how to make it fruitful. He was, as Voltaire called him, Pantophile, the man who loved and was interested in everything. His extreme sensitiveness to impressions was the source of his strength and of his weakness. In his sane, massive, and yet so sensitive temperament, aspirations keen and lyrical as Shelley's seem to blend harmoniously with laughter broad and tolerant as Rabelais's. The latent elements in him of fantastic extravagance were held in check by a *bourgeois* good

sense in which we seem to recognize the shrewd old cutler of Langres. There is a profound democratic instinct in him; his never-failing faith in nature and man seems to be a part of this; it is a faith that may possibly be foolish, but for all those who are born men it is the most reasonable faith, and it has commended itself most to those who have been oftenest disillusioned.

There can be no doubt that the immediate effect of the Revolution of 1789 was to kill the spirit that Diderot represented—the spirit of scientific advance, active even to audacity, and allied with a firm faith in man and in social development. The party of progress were not able to recognize progress in the form of the Revolution, and the more obviously dominating movement of the century that is now closing has been the Counter-Revolution, corresponding in many respects to that Counter-Reformation which dominated Catholic countries during the seventeenth century. Putting aside a few stray enthusiasts, like Shelley or Owen, attractive personalities with little grasp of practical life, the men who have directed European thought, especially in England, have been men whose imaginations were profoundly impressed, and their mental equilibrium considerably disturbed, by that brief convulsion of France; and they developed a curious timidity and distrust, visible even when they had the courage to adopt a shortsighted optimism. It is very interesting



now to turn back to the essay in which Carlyle, perhaps the most brilliant and distinguished representative of the Counter-Revolution, recorded his estimate of Diderot. How curiously old-fashioned seem to us to-day its mitigated admiration, its vague mysticism, its sneers at Diderot's loquacity, his generosity, his dyspepsia—sneers that, in the light of Carlyle's own life, have aroused feelings of pain, and even indignation, among some who in their youth looked up to Carlyle as to a sort of venerable prophet—its absolute failure to perceive that here was a man not to be stifled by a handful of transcendental phraseology. Yet this was at the time accepted as an adequate and even generous account of the matter. To-day we are again in the same position as Diderot, and we are able to see in him the significance, hidden from Carlyle, of the light of science fearlessly brought to illuminate the whole of life.

When men begin to say that everything has been done, the men come who say that there has yet nothing been done. We have congratulated ourselves that many sciences of nature and of man are in the main settled, but we are always compelled to begin again, and on a larger and perhaps simpler scale. In many fields of physical and social knowledge—from electricity at the one end to criminology at the other—we are now laying anew great foundations, and the walls are being raised so rapidly

that it is sometimes hard to know where we are, or to realize what is being done. When science is thus renewing itself, and men are on every hand seeking how, by means of science, they may enlarge and ennoble life, the spirit that moved Diderot is again making itself felt. It is worth while to realize his fellowship for a few moments, and to sun ourselves, if we can bear it, in his inspiring enthusiasm.

## HEINE

### I

**H**EINE gathers up and focuses for us in one vivid point all those influences of his own time which are the forces of to-day. He appears before us, to put it in his own way, as a youthful and militant Knight of the Holy Ghost, tilting against the specters of the past and liberating the imprisoned energies of the human spirit. His interest from this point of view lies, largely, apart from his interest as a supreme lyric poet, the brother of Catullus and Villon and Burns; we here approach him on his prosaic—his relatively prosaic—side.

One hemisphere of Heine's brain was Greek, the other Hebrew. He was born when the genius of Goethe was at its height; his mother had absorbed the frank earthliness, the sane and massive Paganism, of the Roman Elegies, and Heine's ideals in all things, whether he would or not, were always Hellenic—using that word in the large sense in which Heine himself used it—even while he was the first in rank and the last in time of the Romantic poets of Germany. He sought, even consciously, to mold the modern emotional spirit into classic

forms. He wrought his art simply and lucidly, the aspirations that pervade it are everywhere sensuous, and yet it recalls oftener the turbulent temper of Catullus than any serener ancient spirit.

For Heine arose early in active rebellion against a merely passive classicism; in the same way that fiercer and more ardent cries, as from the East, pierce through the songs of Catullus. The mischievous Hermes was irritated by the calm and quiet activities of the aged Zeus of Weimar. And then the earnest Hebrew nature within him, liberated by Hegel's favorite formula of the divinity of man, came into play with its large revolutionary thirsts. Thus it was that he appeared before the world as the most brilliant leader of a movement of national or even world-wide emancipation. The greater part of his prose works, from the youthful "Reisebilder" onwards, and a considerable portion of his poetic work, record the energy with which he played this part.

But whether the Greek or the Hebrew element happened to be most active in Heine, the ideal that he set up for life generally was the equal activity of both sides—in other words, the harmony of flesh and spirit. It is this thought which dominates "The History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany," his finest achievement in this kind. That book was written at the moment when Heine touched the highest point of his enthusiasm for freedom

and his faith in the possibility of human progress. It is a sort of program for the immediate future of the human spirit, in the form of a brief and bold outline of the spiritual history of Germany and Germany's great emancipators, Luther, Lessing, Kant, and the rest. It sets forth in a fresh and fascinating shape that Everlasting Gospel which, from the time of Joachim of Flora downwards, has always gleamed in dreams before the minds of men as the successor of Christianity. Heine's vision of a democracy of cakes and ale, founded on the heights of religious, philosophical, and political freedom, may still spur and thrill us,—even now-a-days, when we have wearied of stately bills of fare for a sulky humanity that will not feed at our bidding, no, not on cakes and ale. Heine is wise enough to see, however imperfectly, that it is unreasonable to expect the speedy erection of any New Jerusalem; for, as he expresses it in his own way, the holy vampires of the Middle Ages have sucked away so much of our life-blood that the world has become a hospital. A sudden revolution of fever-stricken or hysterical invalids can effect little of permanent value; only a long and invigorating course of the tonics of life can make free from danger the open-air of nature. "Our first duty," he asserted in this book, "is to become healthy."

Heine confesses that he too was among the sick and decrepit souls. In reality he was at no

period so full of life and health, so harmoniously inspired and upborne by a great enthusiasm. He laughs a little at Goethe; he fails to see that the Phidian Zeus, at whose confined position he jests, was the greatest liberator of them all; but for the most part his mocking sarcasm is here silent. It was not until ten years later, when the subtle seeds of disease had begun to appear, and when, too, he had perhaps gained a clearer insight into the possibilities of life, that Heine realized that the practical reforming movements of his time were not those for which his early enthusiasm had been aroused. With the slow steps of that consuming disease, and after the revolution of 1848, he ceased to recognize as of old any common root for his various activities, or to insist on the fundamental importance of religion. Everything in the world became the sport of his intelligence. The brain still functioned brilliantly in the atrophied body; the swift lightning-like wit still struck unerringly; it spared not even himself. The "Confessions" are full of irony, covering all things with laughter that is half reverence, or with reverence that is more than half laughter—and woe to the reader who is not at every moment alert! In the romantic, satirical poem of "Atta Troll," written at the commencement of the last period, this, his final attitude, is most completely revealed. It needs a little study to-day, even for a German, but it is well worth that study. The

history of a dancing bear who escapes from servitude, "Atta Troll" is a protest against the radical party, with their narrow conceptions of progress, their tame ideal of *bourgeois* equality, their little watchwords, their solemnity; their indignation at the human creatures who smile "even in their enthusiasm." All these serious concerns of the tribunes of the people are bathed in soft laughter as we listen to the delicious child-like monotonous melody in which the old bear, surrounded by his family, mumbles or mutters of the future. "Atta Troll" is not, as many have thought, a sneer at the most sacred ideals of men. It is, rather, the assertion of those ideals against the individuals who would narrow them down to their own petty scope. There are certain mirrors, Heine said, so constructed that they would present even Apollo as a caricature. But we laugh at the caricature, not at the god. It is well to show, even at the cost of some misunderstanding, that above and beyond the little ideals of our immediate political progress, there is built a yet larger ideal city, of which also the human spirit claims citizenship. The defense of the inalienable rights of the spirit, Heine declares, had been the chief business of his life.

In the history of Germany, it was her two great intellectual liberators, Luther and Lessing, to whom Heine looked up with the most unqualified love and reverence. By his later vindication of the rights of the spirit, not less

than by his earlier fight for religious and political progress, he may be said to have earned for himself a place below, indeed, but not so very far below, those hearty and sound-cored iconoclasts.

## II

To reach the root of the man's nature we must glance at the chief facts of his life. He was born at Düsseldorf, on the Rhine, then occupied by the French, probably on the 13th of December, 1799. He came, by both parents, of that Jewish race which is, as he said once, the dough whereof gods are kneaded. The family of his mother, Betty van Geldern, had come from Holland a century earlier; Betty herself received an excellent education; she shared the studies of her brother, who became a physician of repute; she spoke and read English and French; her favorite books were Rousseau's "Emile" and Goethe's elegies. For novels or poetry generally she cared little. She preferred logic to sentiment, and was careful of the precise value of words. Some letters written during her twenty-fourth year reveal a frank, brave, and sweet nature; she was a bright, attractive little person, and had many wooers. In the summer of 1796 Samson Heine, bearing a letter of introduction, entered the house of the Van Gelderns. He was the son of a Jewish merchant settled in Hanover, and he had just made a campaign in Flanders and



Brabant, in the capacity of commissary with the rank of officer, under Prince Ernest of Cumberland. He was a large and handsome man, with soft blond hair and beautiful hands; there was something about him, said his son, a little characterless, almost feminine; "he was a great child." After a brief courtship he married Betty, and settled at Düsseldorf as an agent for English velveteens. Harry (so he was named after an Englishman) was the first child. From his rather weak and romantic father came whatever was loose and unbalanced in Heine's temperament, and his ineradicable instinct for posing; it was his mother, with her strong and healthy nature, well developed both intellectually and emotionally, and her great ambitions for her son, who, as he himself said, played the chief part in the history of his evolution.

Harry was a quick child; his senses were keen, though he was not physically strong; he loved reading, and his favorite books were "Don Quixote" and "Gulliver's Travels." He used to make rhymes with his only and much-loved sister Lotte, and at the age of ten he wrote a ghost-poem which his teachers considered a masterpiece. At the Lyceum he worked well, at night as well as by day. Only once, at the public ceremony at the end of a school year, he came to grief; he was reciting a poem, when his eyes fell on a beautiful, fair-haired girl in the audience; he hesitated, stammered, was silent, fell down fainting. So early he re-

vealed the extreme cerebral irritability of a nature absorbed in dreams and taken captive by visions. It was not long after this, at the age of seventeen, when his rich uncle at Hamburg was trying in vain to set him forward on a commercial career, that Heine met the woman who aroused his first and last profound passion, always unsatisfied except in so far as it found exquisite embodiment in his poems. He never mentioned her name; it was not till after his death that the form standing behind this Maria, Zuleima, Evelina of so many sweet, strange, or melancholy songs was known to be that of his cousin, Amalie Heine.

With his uncle's help he studied law at Bonn, Göttingen, and Berlin. At Berlin he fell under the dominant influence of Hegel, the vanquisher of the romantic school of which Schelling was the philosophic representative. Heine afterwards referred to this period as that in which he "herded swine with the Hegelians;" it is certain that Hegel exerted great and permanent influence over him. At Berlin, in 1821, appeared his first volume of poems, and then he began to take his true place.

At this period he is described as a good-natured and gentle youth, but reserved, not caring to show his emotions. He was of middle height and slender, with rather long light brown hair (in childhood it was red, and he was called "Rother Harry") framing the pale and beardless oval face, the bright, blue, short-

sighted eyes, the Greek nose, the high cheek bones, the large mouth, the full—half cynical, half sensual—lips. He was not a typical German; like Goethe, he never smoked; he disliked beer, and until he went to Paris he had never tasted *sauerkraut*.

For some years he continued, chiefly at Göttingen, to study law. But he had no liking and no capacity for jurisprudence, and his spasmodic fits of application at such moments as he realized that it was not good for him to depend on the generosity of his rich and kind-hearted uncle Solomon, failed to carry him far. A new idea, a sunny day, the opening of some flower-like *lied*, a pretty girl—and the Pandects were forgotten.

Shortly after he had at last received his doctor's diploma he went through the ceremony of baptism in hope of obtaining an appointment from the Prussian Government. It was a step which he immediately regretted, and which, far from placing him in a better position, excited the enmity both of Christians and Jews, although the Heine family had no very strong views on the matter; Heine's mother, it should be said, was a Deist, his father indifferent, but the Jewish rites were strictly kept up. He still talked of becoming an advocate, until, in 1826, the publication of the first volume of the "Reisebilder" gave him a reputation throughout Germany by its audacity, its charming and picturesque manner, its peculiarly original per-

sonality. The second volume, bolder and better than the first, was received with delight very much mixed with horror, and it was prohibited by Austria, Prussia, and many minor states. At this period Heine visited England; he was then disgusted with Germany and full of enthusiasm for the "land of freedom," an enthusiasm which naturally met with many rude shocks, and from that time dates the bitterness with which he usually speaks of England. He found London—although, owing to a clever abuse of uncle Solomon's generosity, exceedingly well supplied with money—"frightfully damp and uncomfortable;" only the political life of England attracted him, and there were no bounds to his admiration of Canning. He then visited Italy, to spend there the happiest days of his life; and having at length realized that his efforts to obtain any government appointment in Germany would be fruitless, he emigrated to Paris. There, save for brief periods, he remained until his death.

This entry into the city which he had called the New Jerusalem was an important epoch in Heine's life. He was thirty-one years of age, still youthful, and eager to receive new impressions; he was apparently in robust health, notwithstanding constant headaches; Gautier describes him as in appearance a sort of German Apollo. He was still developing, as he continued to develop, even up to the end; the ethereal loveliness of the early poems vanished,

it is true, but only to give place to a closer grasp of reality, a larger laughter, a keener cry of pain. He was now heartily welcomed by the extraordinarily brilliant group then living and working in Paris, including Victor Hugo, George Sand, Balzac, Michelet, Alfred de Musset, Gautier, Chopin, Louis Blanc, Dumas, Sainte-Beuve, Quinet, Berlioz, and he entered with eager delight into their manifold activities. For a time also he attached himself rather closely to the school of Saint-Simon, then headed by Enfantin; he was especially attracted by their religion of humanity, which seemed the realization of his own dreams. Heine's book on "Religion and Philosophy in Germany" was written at Enfantin's suggestion, and the first edition dedicated to him; Enfantin's name was, he said, a sort of shibboleth, indicating the most advanced party in the "liberation war of humanity." In 1855 he withdrew the dedication; it had become an anachronism; Enfantin was no longer ransacking the world in search of *la femme libre*; the martyrs of yesterday no longer bore a cross—unless it were, he added characteristically, the cross of the Legion of Honor.

A few years after his arrival in Paris Heine entered on a relationship which occupied a large place in his life. Mathilde Mirat, a lively grisette of sixteen, was the illegitimate daughter of a man of wealth and position in the provinces, and she had come up from Normandy to

serve in her aunt's shoe-shop. Heine often passed this shop, and an acquaintance, at first carried on silently through the shop-window, gradually ripened into a more intimate relationship. Mathilde could neither read nor write; it was decided that she should go to school for a time; after that they established a little common household, one of those *ménages parisiens*, recognized as almost legitimate, for which Heine had always had a warm admiration, because, as he said, he meant by "marriage" something quite other than the legal coupling effected by parsons and bankers. As in the case of Goethe, it was not until some years later that he went through the religious ceremony, as a preliminary to a duel in which he had become involved by his remarks on Börne's friend, Madame Strauss; he wished to give Mathilde an assured position in case of his death. After the ceremony at St. Sulpice he invited to dinner all those of his friends who had contracted similar relations, in order that they might be influenced by his example. That they were so influenced is not recorded.

It is not difficult to understand the strong and permanent attraction that drew the poet, who had so many intellectual and aristocratic women among his friends, to this pretty, laughter-loving grisette. It lay in her bright and wild humor, her childlike impulsiveness, not least in her charming ignorance. It was delightful to Heine that Mathilde had never read

a line of his books, did not even know what a poet was, and loved him only for himself. He found in her a continual source of refreshment.

He had need of every source of refreshment. In the years that followed his formal marriage in 1841, the dark shadows, within and without, began to close round him. Although he was then producing his most mature work, chiefly in poetry—"Atta Troll," "Romancero," "Deutschland"—his income from literary sources remained small. Mathilde was not a good housekeeper; and even with the aid of a considerable allowance from his uncle Solomon, Heine was frequently in pecuniary difficulties, and was consequently induced to accept a small pension from the French Government, which has sometimes been a matter of concern to those who care for his fame. As years passed, the enmities that he suffered from or cherished increased rather than diminished, and his bitterness found expression in his work. Even Mathilde was not an unallowed source of joy; the charming child was becoming a middle-aged woman, and was still like a child. She could not enter into Heine's interests; she delighted in theaters and circuses, to which he could not always accompany her: and he experienced the pangs of an unreasonable jealousy more keenly than he cared to admit. Then uncle Solomon died, and his son refused, until considerable pressure was brought to bear on him, to continue the allowance which his father had in-

tended Heine to receive. This was a severe blow, and the excitement it produced developed the latent seeds of his disease. It came on with symptoms of paralysis, which even in a few months gave him, he says, the appearance of a dying man. During the next two years, although his brain remained clear, the long pathological tragedy was unfolded.

He went out for the last time in May, 1848. Half blind and half lame, he slowly made his way out of the streets, filled with the noise of revolution, into the silent Louvre, to the shrine dedicated to "the goddess of beauty, our dear lady of Milo." There he sat long at her feet; he was bidding farewell to his old gods; he had become reconciled to the religion of sorrow; tears streamed from his eyes, and she looked down at him, compassionate but helpless: "Dost thou not see, then, that I have no arms, and cannot help thee?"

"On eût dit un Apollon germanique"—so Gautier said of the Heine of 1835; twenty years later an English visitor wrote of him—"He lay on a pile of mattresses, his body wasted so that it seemed no bigger than a child under the sheet which covered him—his eyes closed, and the face altogether like the most painful and wasted 'Ecce Homo' ever painted by some old German painter."

His sufferings were only relieved by ever larger doses of morphia; but although still more troubles came to him, and the failure of a bank



robbed him of his small savings, his spirit remained unconquered. "He is a wonderful man," said one of his doctors; "he has only two anxieties—to conceal his condition from his mother, and to assure his wife's future." His literary work, though it decreased in amount, never declined in power; only, in the words of his friend Berlioz, it seemed as though the poet was standing at the window of his tomb, looking around on the world in which he had no longer a part.

He saw a few friends, of whom Ferdinand Lassalle, with his exuberant power and enthusiasm, was the most interesting to him, as the representative of a new age and a new social faith; and the most loved, that girl-friend who sat for hours or days at a time by the "mattress-grave" in the Rue d'Amsterdam, reading to him or writing his letters or correcting proofs. To the last the loud, bright voice of Mathilde, when he chanced to hear it, scolding the servants or in other active exercise, often made him stop speaking, while a smile of delight passed over his face. He died on the 16th of February, 1856. He was buried, silently, in Montmartre, according to his wish; for, as he said, it is quiet there.

### III

Throughout and above all, Heine was a poet. From first to last he was led by three

angels who danced for ever in his brain, and guided him, singly or together, always. They were the same as in "Atta Troll" he saw in the moonlight from the casement of Uraka's hut—the Greek Diana, grown wanton, but with the noble marble limbs of old; Abunde, the blond and gay fairy of France; Herodias, the dark Jewess, like a palm of the oasis, with all the fragrance of the East between her breasts: "O, you dead Jewess, I love you most, more than the Greek goddess, more than that fairy of the North."<sup>1</sup>

Those genii of three ideal lands danced for ever in his brain, and that is but another way of indicating the opposition that lay at the root of his nature. From one point of view, it may well be, he continued the work of Luther and Lessing, though he was less great-hearted, less sound at core, though he had not that element of sane Philistinism which marks the Shakespeares and Goethes of the world. But he was, more than anything else, a poet, an artist, a dreamer, a perpetual child. The practical reformers among whom at one time he placed himself, the men of one idea, were naturally

<sup>1</sup> "C'est le Bible, plus que tout autre livre," a well-known French critic wrote, "qui a façonné le génie poétique de Heine, en lui donnant sa forme et sa couleur. Ses véritables maîtres, ses vrais inspireurs sont les glorieux inconnus qui ont écrit l'Ecclesiaste et les Proverbes, le Cantique des cantiques, le livre de Job et ce chef-d'œuvre d'ironie discrète intitulé; le livre du prophète Jonas. Celui qui s'appelait un rossignol Allemand niché dans la perruque de Voltaire fut à la fois le moins évangélique des hommes et le plus véritablement biblique des poètes modernes."

irritated and suspicious; there was a flavor of aristocracy in such idealism. In the poem called "Disputation" a Capuchin and a Rabbi argued before the King and Queen at Toledo concerning the respective merits of the Christian and Jewish religions. Both spoke at great length and with great fervor, and in the end the King appealed to the beautiful Queen by his side. She replied that she could not tell which of them was right, but that she did not like the smell of either; and Heine was generally of the Queen's mind. He sighed for the restoration of Barbarossa, the long-delayed German Empire, and his latest biographer asserts that he would have greeted the discovery of Barbarossa under the disguise of the King of Prussia, with Bismarckian insignia of blood and iron, as the realization of all his dreams. It is doubtful, however, whether the meeting would be very cordial on either side. It would probably be the painful duty of the Emperor, as of the Emperor of the vision in "Deutschland," to tell Heine, in very practical language, that he was wanting in respect, wanting in all sense of etiquette; and Heine would certainly reply to the Emperor, as under the same circumstances he replied to the visionary Barbarossa, that that gentleman had better go home again, that during his long absence Emperors had become unnecessary, and that, after all, scepters and crowns made admirable playthings for monkeys.

"We are founding a democracy of gods," he wrote in 1834, "all equally holy, blessed and glorious. You desire simple clothing, ascetic morals, and unseasoned enjoyments; we, on the contrary, desire nectar and ambrosia, purple mantles, costly perfumes, pleasure and splendor, dances of laughing nymphs, music and plays.—Do not be angry, you virtuous republicans; we answer all your reproaches in the words of one of Shakespeare's fools: 'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?' " What could an austere republican, a Puritanic Liberal, who scorned the vision of roses and myrtles and sugar-plums all round, say to this? Börne answered, "I can be indulgent to the games of children, indulgent to the passions of a youth, but when on the bloody day of battle a boy who is chasing butterflies gets between my legs; when at the day of our greatest need, and we are calling aloud on God, the young coxcomb beside us in the church sees only the pretty girls, and winks and flirts—then, in spite of all our philosophy and humanity, we may well grow angry. . . . Heine, with his sybaritic nature, is so effeminate that the fall of a rose-leaf disturbs his sleep; how, then, should he rest comfortably on the knotty bed of freedom? Where is there any beauty without a fault? Where is there any good thing without its ridiculous side? Nature is seldom a poet and never rhymes; ~~let~~ him whom her rhymeless

prose cannot please turn to poetry!" Börne was right; Heine was not the man to plan a successful revolution, or defend a barricade, or edit a popular democratic newspaper, or represent adequately a radical constituency—all this was true. Let us be thankful that it was true; Börnes are ever with us, and we are grateful: there is but one Heine.

The same complexity of nature that made Heine an artist made him a humorist. But it was a more complicated complexity now, a cosmic game between the real world and the ideal world; he could go no farther. The young Catullus of 1825, with his fiery passions crushed in the wine-press of life and yielding such divine ambrosia, soon lost his faith in passion. The militant soldier in the liberation-war of humanity of 1835 soon ceased to flourish his sword. It was only with the full development of his humor, when his spinal cord began to fail and he had taken up his position as a spectator of life, that Heine attained the only sort of unity possible to him—the unity that comes of a recognized and accepted lack of unity. In the lambent flames of this unequalled humor—"the smile of Mephistopheles passing over the face of Christ"—he bathed all the things he counted dearest; to its service he brought the secret of his poet's nature, the secret of speaking with a voice that every heart leaps up to answer. It is scarcely the humor of Aristophanes, though it is a greater force, even in

molding our political and social ideals, than Börne knew; it is oftener a modern development of the humor of the mad king and the fool in "Lear"—that humor which is the last concentrated word of the human organism under the lash of Fate.

And if it is still asked why Heine is so modern, it can only be said that these discords out of which his humor exhaled are those which we have nearly all of us known, and that he speaks with a voice that seems to arise from the depth of our own souls. He represents our period of transition; he gazed, from what seemed the vulgar Pisgah of his day, behind on an Eden that was for ever closed, before on a promised land he should never enter. While with clear sight he announced things to come, the music of the past floated up to him; he brooded wistfully over the vision of the old Olympian gods, dying, amid faint music of cymbals and flutes, forsaken, in the medieval wilderness; he heard strange sounds of psaltries and harps, the psalms of Israel, the voice of Princess Sabbath, across the waters of Babylon. —In a few years this significance of Heine will be lost; that it is not yet lost the eagerness with which his books are read and translated sufficiently testifies.

## WHITMAN

### I

**I**F we put aside imaginative writers—Hawthorne, Poe, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain—America has produced three men of world-wide significance.<sup>1</sup> These three belong to the same corner of the continent; they form a culminating series, and at the same time they complement each other. It is difficult to consider one of them without throwing a glance at the others.

Emerson comes first. In Emerson, after two hundred years, Puritanism seems, for the first time, to have found voice. The men of Banbury and Amsterdam were too much distracted by the outer world to succeed in finding adequate artistic expression for the joys that satisfied them and the spirit that so powerfully moved them. They have been the sport of their enemies, and have come down to us in literature as a set of sour fanatics. It was not until the seed was carried over sea, to germinate slowly and peacefully in New England, that at length it broke into flower, and that we know

<sup>1</sup> The significance of Lowell, a great writer unquestionably, seems to be chiefly national.

clearly that union of robust freedom and mystic exaltation which lies at the heart of Puritanism. In his calm and austere manner—born of the blood that had passed through the veins of six generations of Puritan ministers—Emerson overturned the whole of tradition. "A world in the hand," he said, with cheery, genial skepticism, "is worth two in the bush." With gentle composure, with serene hilarity, perhaps with an allusion to the roses that "make no mention of former roses," he posited the absolute right of the individual to adjudicate in religion, in marriage, in the State. Even he himself, while able, like Spinoza and Goethe, to live by self-regulating laws that are death to men of less sanity, could not always in his peaceful haunts at Concord recognize or allow the fruits of his doctrines.

Emerson was a man of the study; he seems to have known the world as in a *camera obscura* spread out before him on a table. He never seems to come, or to be capable of coming, into direct relations with other men or with Nature. Thoreau, an original and solitary spirit, born amid the same influences as Emerson, but of different temperament, resolved to go out into the world, to absorb Nature and the health of Nature: "I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is



so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms." So he went into Walden Woods and built himself a hut, and sowed beans, and grew strangely familiar with the lives of plants and trees, of birds and beasts and fishes, and with much else besides. This period of self-dependent residence by Walden Pond has usually been regarded as the chief episode in Thoreau's life. Doubtless it was, in the case of a man who spent his whole life in a small New England town, and made the very moderate living that he needed by intermittent work at pencil-making, teaching, land-surveying, magazine-writing, fence-building, or whitewashing. Certainly it was this experience which gave form and character to the activities of his life, and the book in which he recorded his experiences created his fame. But in the experience itself there was nothing of heroic achievement. One would rather say that in the Walden episode Thoreau has vindicated the place of such an experience in all education. Every one, for some brief period in early life, should be thrown on his own resources in the solitudes of Nature, to enter into harmonious relations with himself, and to realize the full scope of self-reliance. For the man or woman to whom

this experience has never been given, the world must hold many needless mysteries and not a few needless miseries.

There was in this man a curious mingling of wildness and austerity, which Mr. Burroughs, in the most discriminating estimate of him yet made, traces to his ancestry. On the paternal side he was French; his privateering grandfather came from Jersey: "that wild revolutionary cry of his, and that sort of restrained ferocity and hirsuteness are French." But on the mother's side he was of Scotch and New England Puritan stock. In person he was rather undersized, with "huge Emersonian nose," and deep-set bluish-gray eyes beneath large overhanging brows; prominent pursed-up lips, a weak receding chin, "a ruddy weather-beaten face, which reminds one of some shrewd and honest animal's." He was a vigorous pedestrian; he had sloping shoulders, long arms, short legs, large hands and feet—the characteristics, for the most part, of an anthropoid ape. His hands were frequently clenched, and there was an air of concentrated energy about him; otherwise nothing specially notable, and he was frequently supposed "a peddler of small wares." He possessed, as his friend Emerson remarked, powers of observation which seemed to indicate additional senses: "he saw as with microscope, heard as with ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard."

It has been claimed for Thoreau by some of his admirers, never by himself, that he was a man of science, a naturalist. Certainly, in some respects, he had in him the material for an almost ideal naturalist. His peculiar powers of observation, and habits of noting and recording natural facts, his patience, his taste for spending his days and nights in the open air, seem to furnish everything that is required. Nor would his morbid dislike of dissection have been any serious bar, for the least worked but by no means the least important portion of natural history is the study of living forms, and for this Thoreau seems to have been peculiarly adapted; he had acquired one of the rarest of arts, that of approaching birds, beasts and fishes, and exciting no fear. There are all sorts of profoundly interesting investigations which only such a man can profitably undertake. But that right question which is at least the half of knowledge was hidden from Thoreau; he seems to have been absolutely deficient in scientific sense. His bare, impersonal records of observations are always dull and unprofitable reading; occasionally he stumbles on a good observation, but, not realizing its significance, he never verifies it or follows it up. His science is that of a fairly intelligent schoolboy—a counting of birds' eggs and a running after squirrels. Of the vital and organic relationships of facts, or even of the existence of such relationships, he seems to have no perception.

Compare any of his books with, for instance, Belt's "Naturalist in Nicaragua," or any of Wallace's books: for the men of science, in their spirit of illuminating inquisitiveness, all facts are instructive; in Thoreau's hands they are all dead. He was not a naturalist: he was an artist and a moralist.

He was born into an atmosphere of literary culture, and the great art he cultivated was that of framing sentences. He desired to make sentences which would "suggest far more than they say," which would "lie like bowlders on the page, up and down or across, not mere repetition, but creation, and which a man might sell his ground or cattle to build," sentences "as durable as a Roman aqueduct." Undoubtedly he succeeded; his sentences frequently have all the massive and elemental qualities that he desired. They have more; if he knew little of the architectonic qualities of style, there is a keen exhilarating breeze blowing about these bowlders, and when we look at them they have the grace and audacity, the happy, natural extravagance of fragments of the finest Decorated Gothic on the site of a fourteenth century abbey. He was in love with the things that are wildest and most untamable in Nature, and of these his sentences often seem to be a solid artistic embodiment, the mountain side, "its sublime gray mass, that antique, brownish-gray, Ararat color," or the "ancient, familiar, immortal cricket sound," the thrush's song, his

*ranz des vâches*, or the song that of all seemed to rejoice him most, the clear, exhilarating, braggart, clarion-crow of the cock. Thoreau's favorite reading was among the Greeks, Pindar, Simonides, the Greek Anthology, especially Æschylus, and a later ancient, Milton. There is something of his paganism in all this, his cult of the aboriginal health-bearing forces of Nature. His paganism, however unobtrusive, was radical and genuine. It was a paganism much earlier than Plato, and which had never heard of Christ.

Thoreau was of a piece; he was at harmony with himself, though it may be that the elements that went to make up the harmony were few. The austerity and exhilaration and simple paganism of his art were at one with his morality. He was, at the very core, a preacher; the morality that he preached, interesting in itself, is, for us, the most significant thing about him. Thoreau was, in the noblest sense of the word, a cynic. The school of Antisthenes is not the least interesting of the Socratic schools, and Thoreau is perhaps the finest flower that that school has ever yielded. He may not have been aware of his affinities, but it will help us if we bear them in mind. The charm that Diogenes exercised over men seems to have consisted in his peculiarly fresh and original intellect, his extravagant independence and self-control, his coarse and effective wit. Thoreau sat in his jar at Walden with the same

originality, independence, and sublime contentment; but his wisdom was suave and his wit was never coarse—exalted, rather, into a perennial humor, flashing now and then into divine epigram. A life in harmony with Nature, the culture of joyous simplicity, the subordination of science to ethics—these were the principles of cynicism, and to these Thoreau was always true. “Every day is a festival,” said Diogenes, and Metrocles rejoiced that he was happier than the Persian king. “I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself,” said Thoreau, “than be crowded on a velvet cushion.” “Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. . . . It is life near the bone, where it is sweetest. . . . Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.” He had “traveled much in Concord.” “Methinks I should be content to sit at the back-door in Concord under the poplar tree for ever.” Such utterances as these strewn throughout Thoreau’s pages—and the saying in the last days of the dying man to the youth who would talk to him about a future world, “One world at a time”—are full, in the uncorrupted sense, of the finest Cynicism. Diogenes, seeing a boy drink out of his hand, threw away his cup; Thoreau had an interesting mineral specimen as a parlor ornament, but it needed dusting every day, and he threw it away: it was not worth its keep. The Cynics seem to have been the first among the Greeks to de-

clare that slavery is opposed to nature. Thoreau not only carried his independence so far as to go to prison rather than pay taxes to Church or State—"the only government that I recognize is the power that establishes justice in the land"—but in 1859, when John Brown lay in prison in Virginia, Thoreau was the one man in America to recognize the greatness of the occasion and to stand up publicly on his side: "Think of him!—of his rare qualities!—such a man as it takes ages to make, and ages to understand; no mock hero, nor the representative of any party. A man such as the sun may not rise upon again in this benighted land. To whose making went the costliest material, the finest adamant; sent to be the redeemer of those in captivity; and the only use to which you can put him is to hang him at the end of a rope!"

Every true Cynic is, above all, a moralist and a preacher. Thoreau could never be anything else; that was, in the end, his greatest weakness. This unfailing ethereality, this perpetual challenge of the acridity and simplicity of Nature, becomes at least hypernatural. Thoreau breakfasts on the dawn: it is well; but he dines on the rainbow and sups on the aurora borealis. Of Nature's treasure more than half is man. Thoreau, with his noble Cynicism, had, as he thought, driven life into a corner, but he had to confess that of all phenomena his own race was to him the most mysterious and undis-

coverable. He writes finely: "The whole duty of man may be expressed in one line: Make to yourself a perfect body;" but this appears to be a purely intellectual intuition. He had a fine insight into the purity of sex and of all natural animal functions, from which we excuse ourselves of speaking by falsely saying they are trifles. "We are so degraded that we cannot speak simply of the necessary functions of human nature;" but he is not bold to justify his insight. He welcomed Walt Whitman, at the very first, as the greatest democrat the world had seen, but he himself remained a natural aristocrat. "He was a man devoid of compassion," remarks Mr. Burroughs, "devoid of sympathy, devoid of generosity, devoid of patriotism, as those words are generally understood." He had learnt something of the mystery of Nature, but the price of his knowledge was ignorance of his fellows. The chief part of life he left untouched.

Yet all that he had to give he gave fully and ungrudgingly; and it was of the best and rarest. We shall not easily exhaust the exhilaration of it. "We need the tonic of wildness." Thoreau has heightened for us the wildness of Nature, and his work—all written, as we need not be told, in the open air—is full of this tonicity; it is a sort of moral quinine, and, like quinine under certain circumstances, it leaves a sweet taste behind.



## II

Whitman has achieved the rarest of all distinctions: he has been placed while yet alive by the side of the world's greatest moral teachers, beside Jesus and Socrates—

“the latter Socrates,  
Greek to the core, yet Yankee too.”

And his biographer records briefly his conviction that this man was “perhaps the most advanced nature the world has yet produced.” Yet the facts of his life are few and simple. He was born in May, 1819, on the shores of the great south bay of Long Island. Like Bret Harte, who has given classic expression to the young life of Western America, Whitman is half Dutch, and this ancestral fact is significant. The well-known portrait prefixed to “Leaves of Grass” shows him with an expression like his father's; in later life he bears a singular resemblance to his mother as she is represented in Bucke's book. He himself, we are told, makes much of the women of his ancestry. “I estimate three leading sources and formative stamps of my own character,”—in his own words—“the maternal nativity-stock brought hither from far-away Netherlands, for one (doubtless the best); the subterranean tenacity and central bony structure (obstinacy, wilfulness) which I get from my paternal English elements, for another; and the Long Island

birth-spot, sea-shores, childhood's scenes, absorptions, with teeming Brooklyn and New York—with, I suppose, my experiences afterwards in the Secession outbreak—for third." His mother, he wrote, was to him "the ideal woman, practical, spiritual, of all of earth, life, love, to me the best."

For thirty years the youth set himself to learn the nature of the world. There could be no better education; he has described its elementary stages, by barnyard and roadside, in "There was a child went forth." The same large receptiveness still went with him, as he was by turn teacher, printer, journalist, government clerk, and always, and above all, loafer. He loafed year after year in Broadway, on Fulton Ferry, on the omnibuses talking to the drivers, in the workshops talking to the artisans. His physical health was perfect; he earned enough to live on; he felt himself the equal of highest or lowest; he drank of the great variegated stream of life before him from every cup. His culture was, in its own way, as large and as sincere as Goethe's. Of books, indeed, he knew little; he was equally ignorant of science, of philosophy, of the fine arts; he appears to have been content—for his own ends wisely content—with elemental and mostly ancient utterances of the race, as the Bible, Homer, Shakespeare, the Nibelungenlied. And by-and-by, in 1855, when this new personality, with its wide and deep roots, had become or-

ganized, Walt Whitman, at the age of thirty-six, himself printed and published a little book called "Leaves of Grass."

After this there was but one fresh formative influence in Whitman's life, but without it his life and his work would both have suffered an immense lack. What had chiefly characterized him so far had been his audacious *nonchalance*, the frank and absolute egotism of a healthy Olympian schoolboy. In 1860 the Civil War began; from 1862 to 1865 Whitman nursed the sick and wounded at Washington. During that period of three years (broken by an attack of hospital malaria, the first illness of his life, contracted in the discharge of these self-imposed duties) he visited and tended nearly 100,000 men, and the personal presence of the man, his inexhaustible love and sympathy, were of even more worth than the manifold small but precious services that he was enabled to render. He has himself given a simple and noble record of his work in the "Memoranda" included in "Specimen Days and Collect," and in "Drum Taps," a still more precious and intimate record of his experiences. From this period a deep tenderness, a divine compassion for all things human, is never absent from Whitman's work; it becomes more predominant than even his superb egotism. It is this element in his large emotional nature, brought to full maturity by these war experiences, which so many persons have felt thrilling through the

man's whole personality, and which probably explains in some measure the devotion he has inspired. Whitman went to Washington young, in the perfection of virile physical energy ("He is a *Man*," said the shrewd Lincoln, to whom Whitman was unknown, as he chanced to see him through a window once); he came away old and enfeebled, having touched the height of life, to walk henceforth a downward path. Physically impressive, however, at that time and always, he remained. He is described, after this time (chiefly by Dr. Bucke), as six feet in height, weighing nearly two hundred pounds; with eyebrows highly arched; eyes light blue, rather small, dull and heavy (this point is of some interest, bearing in mind that with exceptional creative imagination large bright eyes are associated); full-sized mouth, with full lips; large handsome ears, and senses exceptionally acute. The peculiar complexion of his face, Bucke described as a bright maroon tint; that of his body "a delicate but well-marked rose color," unlike the English or Teutonic stock; his gait an elephantine roll. "No description," his Boswellian biographer, Dr. Bucke, again speaks (and Mr. Kennedy, a later and equally Boswellian biographer, supplies confirmatory details), "can give any idea of the extraordinary physical attractiveness of the man," even upon those who came in contact with him for a moment. In 1873 he had a stroke of paralysis (left hemiplegia), and for

three years there seemed little promise of recovery. The return to health was slow and incomplete. In those years he spent much time bathing, or naked in the open air—"hanging clothes on a rail near by, keeping old broad-brim straw on head and easy shoes on feet"—and considered that that counted for much in his restoration to health. "Perhaps," he adds, "he or she to whom the free exhilarating ecstasy of nakedness in nature has never been eligible, has not really known what purity is—nor what faith or art or health really is."

It is not possible to apprehend this man's work unless the man's personality is apprehended. Every great book contains the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, and no book throbs with a more vivid personal life than "Leaves of Grass." It is the whole outcome of a whole man, audacious and unrepentant, who has here set down the emotional reverberations of a manifold life. "For only," according to his own large saying,

"For only at last, after many years, after chastity,  
friendship, procreation, prudence and nakedness,  
After treading ground and breasting river and lake,  
After a loosened throat, after absorbing eras, tem-  
peraments, races, after knowledge, freedom,  
crimes,  
After complete faith, after clarifyings, elevations, and  
removing obstructions,  
After these and more, it is just possible there comes to  
a man, a woman, the divine power to speak  
words."

## III

Of art, in the conventional sense of the word, there is not much in Whitman. If we wish to approach him as an artist, J. F. Millet probably helps us to understand him, more than any other artist in foreign fields and lands. Millet has a deep and close relationship to Whitman. At first sight, their work is curiously unlike: Whitman, in a great new country, delighting in every manifestation of joy and youth and hope; Millet, the child of an older and colder country, in love with age and suffering and toil. Yet in essentials it is identical. Even personally, it is said, Millet recalled Whitman.<sup>1</sup> Judging from the representations of him, Millet, in his prime, was a colossal image of manly beauty—deep-chested, muscular, erect, the quiet, penetrating blue eyes, the delicately expressive eyelids, the large nose and dilating sensitive nostrils, the firm mouth and jaw, the thick and dark brown beard. The consumptive artist—a Keats or a Thoreau—craves for health and loveliness; he turns shuddering from all that is not pleasant. It is only these men, heroic incarnations of health, who are strong enough to look sanely upon age and toil and suffering, and equal to the prodigious expense of spirit of writing "Leaves of Grass"

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting paper of "Recollections of J. F. Millet" in the "Century," May, 1889, to which I am indebted for several of the painter's utterances here quoted.

with a heart laden with memories of Washington hospitals.

Millet and Whitman have, each in his own domain, made the most earnest, thorough, and successful attempts of modern times to bring the Greek spirit into art, the same attempt which Jan Steen, a great artist whom we scarcely yet rate at his proper value, made in seventeenth century Holland. It is not by the smooth nudities of a Bouguereau or a Leighton that we reach Hellenism. The Greek spirit is the simple, natural, beautiful interpretation of the life of the artist's own age and people under his own sky, as shown especially in the human body. It cannot be the same in two ages or in two lands. One little incident mentioned by Madame Millet to a friend is suggestive, "of Millet compelling her to wear the same shirt for an uncomfortably long time; not to paint the dirt, as his early critics would have us believe, but that the rough linen should simplify its folds and take the form of the body, that he might give a fresher and stronger accent to those qualities he so loved, the garment becoming, as it were, a part of the body, and expressing, as he has said, even more than the nude, the larger and simpler forms of Nature." There is a genuine Hellenic spirit, working in a different age and under a different sky. Millet felt that for him it was not true to paint the naked body, and at the same time that the body alone was the supremely interesting thing to

paint. In the "Sower" we see this spirit expressed in the highest form which Millet ever reached—the grace of natural beauty and strength, in no remote discobolus or gladiator, but in the man of his own country and clime, a peasant like himself, whose form he had studied from his own in the mirror in his own studio. The coarse clothes and rough *sabots* play the same part in Millet's work as the bizarre, uncouth words and varied technical phraseology in Whitman's; one may call them accidental, but they are inevitable and necessary accidents. "One must be able," Millet said, "to make use of the trivial for the expression of the sublime." They both insisted that the artist must deal with the average and typical, not with the exceptional. They both tried to bring the largeness and simplicity of Nature into their work, and to suggest more than they expressed. They both refused to believe any part of Nature could be other than lovely. "The man who finds any phase or effect in Nature not beautiful," said Millet sternly, "the lack is in his own heart."

It is not as an artist that Whitman is chiefly interesting to us. It is true that he has written "Out of the Cradle endlessly rocking," "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard bloomed," "This Compost," and other fragments from which may be gained a simple and pure æsthetic joy. Frequently, also, we come across phrases which reveal a keen perception of the strangeness and



beauty of things, lines that possess a simplicity and grandeur scarcely less than Homeric; thus, "the noiseless splash of sunrise"; or of the young men bathing, who "float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun." But such results are accidental, and outside the main purpose. For that very reason they have at times something of the divine felicity, unforeseen and incalculable, of Nature; yet always, according to a rough but convenient distinction, it is the poetry of energy rather than the poetry of art. When Whitman speaks prose, the language of science, he is frequently incoherent, emotional, unbalanced, with no very just and precise sense of the meaning or words or the structure of reasoned language.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that in this man the moral in its largest sense—that is to say, the personality and its personal relations—is more developed than the scientific; and that on the æsthetic side the artist is merged in the mystic, wrapt in emotional contemplation of a cosmic whole. What we see, therefore, is a manifold personality seeking expression for itself in a peculiarly flexible and responsive medium. It is a deep as well as a superficial re-

<sup>1</sup> I think this defective scientific perception is perhaps as responsible as any failure of moral insight for the vigorous manner in which an element of "manly love" flourishes in "Calamus" and elsewhere. Whitman is hardy enough to assert that he expects it will to a large extent take the place of love between the sexes. "Manly love," even in its extreme form, is certainly Greek, as is the degradation of women with which it is always correlated; yet the much slighter degradation of women in modern times Whitman sincerely laments.

semblance that these chants bear to the Scriptures of the old Hebrews—as Isaiah or the Book of Job—wherein also the writer becomes an artist, and also absorbs all available science, but where his purpose is the personal expression of a moral and religious conception of life and the world. Whitman has invented a name for the person who occupies this rare and, in the highest degree, significant position; he calls him the “Answerer.” It is not the function of answerers, like that of philosophers, to arrange the order and limits of ideas, for they have to settle what ideas are or are not to exist; nor is it theirs, like the singers, to celebrate the ostensible things of the world, or to seek out imaginative forms, for they are “not followers of beauty, but the august masters of beauty.” The answerer is, in short, the maker of ideals.

Whitman will not minimize the importance of the answerer’s mission. “I, too,” he exclaims, “following many and followed by many, inaugurate a religion.” If we wish to understand Walt Whitman, we must have some conception of this religion. We shall find that two great and contradictory conceptions dominate his work; although in his thoughts, as in his modes of expression, it is not possible to find any strongly marked progression.

The “Song of Myself” is the most complete utterance of Whitman’s first great conception of life.

"I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the  
soul;  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's  
self is."

The absolute unity of matter and spirit, and all which that unity involves, is the dominant conception of this first and most characteristic period. "If the body were not the soul," he asks, "what is the soul?" This is Whitman's naturalism; it is the re-assertion of the Greek attitude on a new and larger foundation. "Let it stand as an indubitable truth, which no inquiries can shake, that the mind of man is so entirely alienated from the righteousness of God, that he cannot conceive, desire, or design anything but what is wicked, distorted, foul, impure and iniquitous; that his heart is so thoroughly environed by sin that it can breathe out nothing but corruption and rottenness." That is the fundamental thought of Christian tradition set down in the "Institutes," clearly and logically, by the genius of Calvin. It is the polar opposite of Whitman's thought, and therefore for Whitman the moral conception of duty has ceased to exist.

"I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses.  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)"

Morality is thus the normal activity of a healthy nature, not the product either of tradition or of rationalism.

"Whatever tastes sweet to the most perfect person, that is finally right"—this, it has been said, is the maxim on which Whitman's morality is founded, and it is the morality of Aristotle. But no Greek ever asserted and illustrated it with such emphatic iteration.

From the days when the Greek spirit found its last embodiment in the brief songs, keen or sweet, of the "Anthology," the attitude which Whitman represents in the "Song of Myself" has never lacked representatives. Throughout the Middle Ages those strange haunting echoes to the perpetual chant of litany and psalm, the Latin student-songs, float across all Europe with their profane and gay paganism, their fresh erotic grace, their "In taberna quando sumus," their "Ludo cum Cæcilia," their "Gaudeamus igitur." In the sane and lofty sensuality of Boccaccio, as it found expression in the history of Alacié and many another wonderful story, and in Gottfried of Strasburg's assertion of human pride and passion in "Tristan and Isolde," the same strain changed to a stronger and nobler key. Then came the great wave of the Renaissance through Italy and France and England, filling art and philosophy with an exaltation of physical life, and again later, in the movements that center around the French Revolution, an exaltation of arrogant and independent intellectual life. But all these manifestations were sometimes partial, sometimes extravagant; they were impulses of the natural

man surging up in rebellion against the dominant Christian temper; they were, for the most part consciously, of the nature of reactions. We feel that there is a fatal lack about them which Christianity would have filled; only in Goethe is the antagonism to some extent reconciled. Beneath the vast growth of Christianity, for ever exalting the unseen by the easy method of pouring contempt on the seen, and still ever producing some strange and exquisite flower of *ascêsis*—some Francis or Theresa or Fénelon—a slow force was working underground. A tendency was making itself felt to find in the theoretically despised physical—in those every-day stones which the builders of the Church had rejected—the very foundation of the mysteries of life; if not the basis for a new vision of the unseen, yet for a more assured vision of the seen.

No one in the last century expressed this tendency more impressively and thoroughly, with a certain insane energy, than William Blake—the great chained spirit whom we see looking out between the bars of his prison-house with those wonderful eyes. Especially in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” in which he seems to gaze most clearly “through narrow chinks of his cavern,” he has set forth his conviction that “first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged,” and that “if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man, as

it is, infinite." This most extraordinary book is, in his own phraseology, the Bible of Hell.

Whitman appeared at a time when this stream of influence, grown mighty, had boldly emerged. At the time that "Leaves of Grass" sought the light Turgenev was embodying in the typical figure of Bassaroff the modern militant spirit of science, positive and audacious—a spirit marked also, as Hinton pointed out, by a new form of asceticism, which lay in the denial of emotion. Whitman, one of the very greatest emotional forces of modern times, who had grown up apart from the rigid and technical methods of science, face to face with a new world and a new civilization, which he had eagerly absorbed so far as it lay open to him, had the good inspiration to fling himself into the scientific current, and so to justify the demands of his emotional nature; to represent himself as the inhabitant of a vast and co-ordinated cosmos, tenoned and mortised in granite:

"All forces have been steadily employed to complete  
and delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

That Whitman possessed no trained scientific instinct is unquestionably true, but it is impossible to estimate his significance without understanding what he owes to science. Something, indeed, he had gained from the philosophy of Hegel—with its conception of the universe as a

single process of evolution, in which vice and disease are but transient perturbations—with which he had a second-hand acquaintance that has left distinct, but not always well assimilated, marks on his work; but, above all, he was indebted to those scientific conceptions which, like Emerson, he had absorbed or divined. It is these that lie behind “Children of Adam.”

This mood of sane and cheerful sensuality, rejoicing with a joy as massive and calm-eyed as Boccaccio’s, a moral-fibered joy that Boccaccio never knew, in all the manifestations of the flesh and blood of the world—saying, not: “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” but, with Clifford: “Let us take hands and help, for this day we are alive together”—is certainly Whitman’s most significant and impressive mood. Nothing so much reveals its depth and sincerity as his never-changing attitude towards death. We know the “fearful thing” that Claudio, in Shakespeare’s play, knew as death:

“to die and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;  
. . . to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts  
Imagine howling!”

And all the Elizabethans in that age of splendid and daring life—even Raleigh and Bacon—felt that same shudder at the horror and mystery of death. Always they felt behind them some vast medieval charnel-house,

gloomy and awful, and the sunniest spirits of the English Renaissance quail when they think of it. There was in this horror something of the child's vast and unreasoned dread of darkness and mystery, and it scarcely survived the scientific and philosophic developments of the seventeenth century. Whitman's attitude is not the less deep-rooted and original. For he is not content to argue, haughtily indifferent, with Epicurus and Epictetus, that death can be nothing to us, because it is no evil to lose what we shall never miss. Whitman will reveal the loveliness of death. We feel constantly in "Leaves of Grass" as to some extent we feel before the "Love and Death" and some other pictures of one of the greatest of English artists. "I will show," he announces, "that nothing can happen more beautiful than death." It must not be forgotten that Whitman speaks not merely from the standpoint of the most intense and vivid delight in the actual world, but that he possessed a practical familiarity with disease and death which has perhaps never before fallen to the lot of a great writer. At the end of the "Song of Myself" he bequeaths himself to the dust, to grow from the grass he loves:

"If you want me again, look for me under your boot-  
soles,

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fiber your blood."



And to any who find that dust but a poor immortality, he would say with Schopenhauer, "Oho! do you know, then, what dust is?" The vast chemistry of the earth, the sweetness that is rooted in what we call corruption, the life that is but the leavings of many deaths, is nobly uttered in "This Compost," in which he reaches beyond the corpse that is good manure to sweet-scented roses, to the polished breasts of melons; or again, in the noble elegy, "Pensive on her dead gazing," on those who died during the war. In his most perfectly lyrical poem, "Out of the Cradle endlessly rocking," Whitman has celebrated death—"that strong and delicious word"—with strange tenderness; and never has the loveliness of death been sung in a more sane and virile song than the solemn death-carol in "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard bloomed":

"Dark mother, always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest wel-  
come?

Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song, that when thou must indeed  
come, come unfalteringly.

"Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad  
fields and the prairies wide,  
Over the dense-packed cities all and the teeming  
wharves and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O  
Death."

Whitman's second great thought on life lies in his egoism. His intense sense of individuality was marked from the first; it is emphatically asserted in the "Song of Myself"—

"And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is"—

where it lies side by side with his first great thought. But even in the "Song of Myself" it asserts a separate existence:

"This day before dawn I ascended a hill and looked  
at the crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit, *When we become the en-  
folders of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowl-  
edge of everything in them, shall we be filled and  
satisfied then?*  
And my spirit said, *No, we but level that lift to pass  
and continue beyond.*"

In the end he once, at least, altogether denies his first thought; he alludes to that body which he had called the equal of the soul, or even the soul itself, as excrement:

"Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be  
burned, or reduced to powder, or buried,  
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres."

The first great utterance was naturalistic; this egoism is spiritualistic. It is the sublime apotheosis of Yankee self-reliance. "I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself." This became the dominant concep-

tion in Whitman's later work, and fills his universe at length. Of a God, although he sometimes uses the word to obtain emphasis, he at no time had any definite idea. Nature, also, was never a living vascular personality for him; when it is not a mere aggregate of things, it is an order, sometimes a moral order. Also he wisely refuses with unswerving consistency to admit an abstract Humanity; of "man" he has nothing to say; there is nothing anywhere in the universe for him but individuals, undying, everlastingly aggrandizing individuals. This egoism is practical, strenuous, moral; it cannot be described as religious. Whitman is lacking—and in this respect he comes nearer to Goethe than to any other great modern man—in what may be possibly the disease of "soul," the disease that was so bitterly bewailed by Heine. Whitman was congenitally deficient in "soul"; he is a kind of Titanic Undine. "I never had any particular religious experiences," he told Bucke, "never felt the need of spiritual regeneration"; and although he describes himself as "pleased with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher, impressed seriously at the camp-meeting," we know what weight to give to this utterance when we read elsewhere, of animals:

"They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their  
sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to  
God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the  
mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole  
earth."

We may detect this lack of "soul" in his attitude towards music; for, in its highest development, music is the special exponent of the modern soul in its complexity, its passive resignation, its restless mystical ardors. That Whitman delighted in music is clear; it is equally clear, from the testimony of his writings and of witnesses, that the music he delighted in was simple and joyous melody as in Rossini's operas; he alludes vaguely to symphonies, but

"when it is a grand opera,  
Ah! this indeed is music—this suits me."

That Whitman could have truly appreciated Beethoven, or understood Wagner's "Tannhäuser," is not conceivable.

With Whitman's egoism is connected his strenuousness. There is a stirring sound of trumpets always among these "Leaves of Grass." This man may have come, as he tells us, to inaugurate a new religion, but he has few or no marks upon him of that mysticism—that Eastern spirit of glad renunciation of the self in a larger self—which is of the essence of

religion. He is at the head of a band of sinewy and tan-faced pioneers, with pistols in their belts and sharp-edged axes in their hands:

"And he going with me leaves peace and routine  
behind him,  
And stakes his life to be lost at any moment."

This strenuousness finds expression in the hurried jolt and bustle of the lines, always alert, unresting, ever starting afresh. Passages of sweet and peaceful flow are hard to find in "Leaves of Grass," and the more precious when found. Whitman hardly succeeds in the expression of joy; to feel exquisitely the pulse of gladness a more passive and feminine sensibility is needed, like that we meet with in "Towards Democracy"; we must not come to this focus of radiant energy for repose or consolation.

This egoism, this strenuousness, reaches at the end to heights of sublime audacity. When we read certain portions of "Leaves of Grass" we seem to see a vast phalanx of Great Companions passing for ever along the cosmic roads, stalwart Pioneers of the Universe. There are superb young men, athletic girls, splendid and savage old men—for the weak seem to have perished by the roadside—and they radiate an infinite energy, an infinite joy. It is truly a tremendous diastole of life to which the crude and colossal extravagance of this vision bears witness; we weary soon of its strenuous vitality,

and crave for the systole of life, for peace and repose. It is not strange that the immense faith of the prophet himself grows hesitant and silent at times before "all the meanness and agony without end," and doubts that it is an illusion and "that may-be identity beyond the grave a beautiful fable only." Here and again we meet this access of doubt, and even amid the faith of the "Prayer of Columbus" there is a tremulous, pathetic note of sadness.

Yet there is one keen sword with which Whitman is always able to cut the knot of this doubt—the sword of love. He has but to grasp love and comradeship, and he grows indifferent to the problem of identity beyond the grave. "He a-hold of my hand has completely satisfied me." He discovers at last that love and comradeship—adhesiveness—is, after all, the main thing, "base and finale, too, for all metaphysics"; deeper than religion, underneath Socrates and underneath Christ. With a sound insight he finds the roots of the most universal love in the intimate and physical love of comrades and lovers:

"I mind how once we lay, such a transparent summer  
morning,  
How you settled your head athwart my hips and  
gently turned over upon me,  
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and  
plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,  
And reached till you felt my beard, and reached till  
you held my feet.

"Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and  
knowledge that pass all the argument of the  
earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of  
my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of  
my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,  
and the women my sisters and lovers,  
And that a kelson of the creation is love."

## IV

This "love" of Whitman's is a very personal matter; of an abstract Man, a *solidaire* Humanity, he never speaks; it does not appear ever to have occurred to him that so extraordinary a conception can be formulated; his relations to men generally spring out of his relations to particular men. He has touched and embraced his fellows' flesh; he has felt throughout his being the mysterious reverberations of the contact:

"There is something in staying close to men and  
women and looking on them, and in the contact  
and odor of them, that pleases the soul well,  
All things please the soul, but these please the soul  
well."

This personal and intimate fact is the center from which the whole of Whitman's morality radiates. Of an abstract Humanity, it is true, he has never thought; he has no vision of Nature as a spiritual Presence; God is to him a

word only, without vitality; to Art he is mostly indifferent; yet there remains this great moral kernel, springing from the sexual impulse, taking practical root in a singularly rich and vivid emotional nature, and bearing within it the promise of a city of lovers and friends.

This moral element is one of the central features in Whitman's attitude towards sex and the body generally. For the lover there is nothing in the loved one's body impure or unclean; a breath of passion has passed over it, and all things are sweet. For most of us this influence spreads no farther; for the man of strong moral instinct it covers all human things in infinitely widening circles; his heart goes out to every creature that shares the loved one's delicious humanity; henceforth there is nothing human that he cannot touch with reverence and love. "Leaves of Grass" is penetrated by this moral element. How curiously far this attitude is from the old Christian way we realize when we turn to those days in which Christianity was at its height, and see how Saint Bernard with his mild and ardent gaze looked out into the world of Nature and saw men as "stinking spawn, sacks of dung, the food of worms."

But there is another element in Whitman's attitude—the artistic. It shows itself in a two-fold manner. Whitman came of a vigorous Dutch stock; these Van Velsors from Holland have fully as large a part in him as anything his English ancestry gave him, and his Dutch race



shows itself chiefly in his artistic manner. The supreme achievement in art of the Dutch is their seventeenth century painting. What marked those Dutch artists was the ineradicable conviction that every action, social or physiological, of the average man, woman, child, around them might be, with love and absolute faithfulness, phlegmatically set forth. In their heroic earthliness they could at no point be repulsed; color and light may aureole their work, but the most commonplace things of Nature shall have the largest nimbus. That is the temper of Dutch art throughout; no other art in the world has the same characteristics. In the art of Whitman alone do we meet with it again, impatient indeed and broken up into fragments, pierced through with shafts of light from other sources, but still constant and unmistakable. The other artistic element in Whitman's attitude is modern; it is almost the only artistic element by which, unconsciously perhaps, he allies himself to modern traditions in art instead of breaking through them by his own volcanic energy—a curious research for sexual imagery in Nature, imagery often tinged by bizarre and mystical color. Rossetti occasionally uses sexual imagery with rare felicity, as in "Nuptial Sleep":

"And as the last slow sudden drops are shed  
From sparkling eaves when all the storm has fled,  
So singly flagged the pulses of each heart."

With still greater beauty and audacity Whitman, in "I sing the body electric," celebrates the last abandonment of love:

"Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly  
into the prostrate dawn,  
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,  
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-fleshed  
day."

Or, again, in the marvelously keen "Faces"—so realistic and so imaginative—when the "lily's face" speaks out her longing to be filled with albescent honey. This man has certainly felt the truth of that deep saying of Thoreau's, that for him to whom sex is impure there are no flowers in Nature. He cannot help speaking of man's or woman's life in terms of Nature's life, of Nature's life in terms of man's; he mingles them together with an admirably balanced rhythm, as in "Spontaneous Me." All the functions of man's or woman's life are sweet to him because they bear about them a savor of the things that are sweet to him anywhere in the world,

"Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of  
birds,  
Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves."

Sometimes when he is on this track he seems to lose himself in mystic obscurity; and the words in which he records his impressions are mere patches of morbid color.

There is a third element in Whitman's attitude. It is clear that he had from the outset what may be vaguely called a scientific purpose in that frank grasp of the body, which has a significance to be measured by the fierce opposition it aroused, and by the tenacity with which, in the latest volume of his old age, "November Boughs," he still insists that the principle of those lines so gives breath to the whole scheme that the bulk of the pieces might as well have been left unwritten were those lines omitted. He has himself admirably set this forth in "A Memorandum at a Venture" in "Specimen Days and Collect." In religion and politics we have after a great struggle, gained the priceless possibility of liberty and sincerity. But the region of sex is still, like our moral and social life generally, to a large extent unreclaimed; there still exist barbarous traditions which medieval Christianity has helped to perpetuate, so that the words of Pliny regarding the contaminating touch of a woman, who has always been regarded as in a peculiar manner the symbol of sex—"Nihil facile reperiabatur mulierum profluvio magis monstrificum"—are not even yet meaningless. Why should the sweetening breath of science be guarded from this spot? Why should not "freedom and faith and earnestness" be introduced here? Our attitude towards this part of life affects profoundly our attitude towards life altogether. To realize this, read Swift's "Strephon and Chloe," which

enshrines, vividly and unshrinkingly, in a classic form, a certain emotional way of approaching the body. It narrates the very trivial experiences of a man and woman on their bridal night. The incidents are nothing; they are perfectly innocent; the interesting fact about them is the general attitude which they enfold. The unquestioning faith of the man is that in setting down the simple daily facts of human life he has drowned the possibilities of love in filth. And Swift here represents, in an unflinchingly logical fashion, the opinions, more or less realized, more or less disguised, of most people even to-day. Cannot these facts of our physical nature be otherwise set down? Why may we not "keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart?" That is, in effect, the question which, in "A Memorandum at a Venture," Whitman tells us that he undertook to answer. This statement of it was probably an afterthought; else he would have carried out his attempt more thoroughly and more uncompromisingly.

For I doubt if even Whitman has fully realized the beauty and purity of organic life; the scientific element in him was less strong than the moral, or even the artistic. While his genial poetic manner of grasping things is of prime importance, the new conceptions of purity are founded on a scientific basis which must be deeply understood. Swift's morbid and exaggerated spiritualism, a legacy of medievalism

—and the ordinary “common-sense” view is but the unconscious shadow of medieval spiritualism—is really founded on ignorance, in other words, on the traditional religious conceptions of an antique but still surviving barbarism.

From our modern standpoint of science, opening his eyes anew, the wonderful cycles of normal life are for ever clean and pure, the loathsomeness, if indeed anywhere, lies in the conceptions of hypertrophied and hyperæsthetic brains. Some who have striven to find a vital natural meaning in the central sacrament of Christianity have thought that the Last Supper was an attempt to reveal the divine mystery of food, to consecrate the loveliness of the mere daily bread and wine which becomes the life of man. Such sacraments of Nature are everywhere subtly woven into the texture of men’s bodies. All loveliness of the body is the outward sign of some vital use.

Doubtless these relationships have been sometimes perceived and their meaning realized by a sort of mystical intuition, but it is only of recent years that science has furnished them with a rational basis. The chief and central function of life—the omnipresent process of sex, ever wonderful, ever lovely, as it is woven into the whole texture of our man’s or woman’s body—is the pattern of all the process of our life. At whatever point touched, the reverberation, multiplexly charged with uses, meanings, and emotional associations of infinite charm, to

the sensitive individual more or less conscious, spreads throughout the entire organism. We can no longer intrude our crude distinctions of high and low. We cannot now step in and say that this link in the chain is eternally ugly and that is eternally beautiful. For irrational disgust, the varying outcome of individual idiosyncrasy, there is doubtless still room; it is incalculable, and cannot be reached. But that rational disgust which was once held to be common property has received from science its death-blow. In the growth of the sense of purity, which Whitman, not alone, has annunciated, lies one of our chief hopes for morals, as well as for art.

## V

Behind "Leaves of Grass" stands the personality of the man Walt Whitman; that is the charm of the book and its power. It is, in his own words, the record of a *Person*. A man has here sought to give a fresh and frank representation of his nature—physical, intellectual, moral, æsthetic—as he received it, and as it grew in the great field of the world. Sometimes there is an element in this record which, while perhaps very American, reminds one of the great Frenchman who shouted so lustily through his huge brass trumpet, seated on the apex of the universe in the Avenue d'Eylau. The noble lines to "You felons on trial in

Courts" accompany "To him that was crucified." Such rhetorical flourishes do not impair the value of this revelation. The self-revelation of a human personality is the one supremely precious and enduring thing. All art is the search for it. The strongest and most successful of religions were avowedly founded on personalities, more or less dimly seen. The intimate and candid record of personality alone gives quickening energy to books. Herein is the might of "Leaves of Grass."

In our overstrained civilization the tendency in literature—and in life as it acts on literature and is again reacted on by it—is, on the one hand, towards an artificial mode of presentment, that is, a divorce between the actual and the alleged, a divorce which, in the language of satire, is often called hypocrisy. On the other hand, the tendency is towards a singleness of aim and ideal indeed, but a thin, narrow, super-refined ideal, at the same time rather hysterical and rather prim. In youth we cannot see through these *Tartuffes* and *Précieuses*; when we become grown men and women we feel a great thirst for Nature, for reality in literature, and we slake it at such fountains as this of "Leaves of Grass." Like Antæus of old we bow down to touch the earth, to come in contact with the great primal energies of Nature, and to grow strong. We realize that the structure of the world is indeed built most gloriously on the immense pillars of Hunger and Love,

and we will not seek to deny or to attenuate its foundations. Presenting a truth so abstract in fresh and living concrete language, this man, as an Adam in a new Paradise, which is the very world itself, walks again upon the earth, sometimes with calm complaisance, sometimes "deliriating" wildly:

"Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,  
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body  
as I pass,  
Be not afraid of my body."

He has tossed "a new gladness and roughness" among men and women. He has opened a fresh channel of Nature's force into human life—the largest since Wordsworth, and more fit for human use—"the amplitude of the earth, and the coarseness and sexuality of the earth, and the great charity of the earth, and the equilibrium also." And in his vigorous masculine love, asserting his own personality he has asserted that of all—"By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms." Charging himself in every place with contentment and triumph, he embraces all men, as St. Francis in his sweet, humble, Christian way also embraced them, in the spirit of audacity, and rankness, and pride. So that all he has written is summed up in one ejaculation: "How vast, how eligible, how joyful, how real is a human being, himself or herself!"



## IBSEN

**T**HE Scandinavian peoples hold to-day a position not unlike that held at the beginning of the century by Germany. They speak, in various modified forms, a language which the rest of the world have regarded as little more than barbarous, and are looked upon generally as an innocent and primitive folk. Yet they contain centers of intense literary activity; they have produced novels of a peculiarly fresh and penetrating realism; and they possess, moreover, a stage on which great literary works may be performed, and the burning questions of the modern world be scenically resolved. It is natural that Norway, with its historical past and literary traditions, should be the chief center of this activity, and that a Norwegian should stand forth to-day as the chief figure of European significance that has appeared in the Teutonic world of art since Goethe.

To understand Norwegian art—whether in its popular music, with its extremes of melancholy or hilarity, or in its highly-developed literature—we must understand the peculiar character of the land which has produced this people. It is a land having, in its most charac-

teristic regions, a year of but one day and night—the summer a perpetual warm sunlit day filled with the aroma of trees and plants, and the rest of the year a night of darkness and horror; a land which is the extreme northern limit of European civilization, on the outskirts of which the great primitive gods still dwell; and where elves and fairies and mermaids are still regarded, according to the expression of Jonas Lie, as tame domestic animals. Such an environment must work mightily on the spirit and temper of the race. As one of the persons in Björnson's "Over Ævne" observes—"There is something in Nature here which challenges whatever is extraordinary in us. Nature herself here goes beyond all ordinary measure. We have night nearly all the winter; we have day nearly all the summer, with the sun by day and by night above the horizon. You have seen it at night half-veiled by the mists from the sea; it often looks three, even four, times larger than usual. And then the play of colors on sky, sea, and rock, from the most glowing red to the softest and most delicate yellow and white! And then the colors of the Northern Lights on the winter sky, with their more suppressed kind of wild pictures, yet full of unrest and for ever changing! Then the other wonders of Nature! These millions of sea-birds, and the wandering processions of fish, stretching for miles! These perpendicular cliffs that rise directly out of the sea! They are not like other mountains, and

the Atlantic roars round their feet. And the ideas of the people are correspondingly unmeasured. Listen to their legends and stories."

So striking are the contrasts in the Norwegian character that they have been supposed to be due to the mingling of races; the fair-haired, blue-eyed Norwegian of the old Sagas, silent and deep-natured, being modified, now (especially in the north) by the darker, brown-eyed Lapp, with his weakness of character, vivid imagination, and tendency to natural mysticism, and, again (especially in the east), by the daring, practical, energetic Finn.

However this may be, among the Norwegian poets and novelists various qualities often meet together in striking opposition; wild and fantastic imagination stands beside an exact realism and a loving grasp of nature; a tendency to mysticism and symbol beside a healthy naturalism. We find these characteristics variously combined in Ibsen; in Björnson, with his virile strength and generous emotions, amid which a mystic influence now and then appears; in Jonas Lie, with his subtle and delicate spirit, so intimately national; in Kielland, a realistic novelist of most dainty and delicate art, beneath which may be heard the somber undertone of his sympathy with the weak and the oppressed. Of these writers, and others only less remarkable, one alone is at all well known in England, and even he is known exclusively by his early work, especially by that most delightful of peasant

stories, "Arne." In Germany the Scandinavian novelists and dramatists have received much attention, and are widely known through excellent and easily accessible translations. Yet our English race and speech are even more closely allied to the northern; our land is studded with easily recognizable Scandinavian place-names and Scandinavian colonies, whose dialects are full of genuine Scandinavian words unknown to literary English. It is not likely that this indifference to the social, political, and literary history of our northern kinsmen can last much longer.

About 1720 a Danish skipper, one Peter Ibsen, came over from Moen<sup>1</sup> to Bergen and settled there. He married the daughter of a German who had likewise emigrated from his own country: these were the poet's great-great-grandparents. Peter Ibsen had a son, Henrik Petersen Ibsen, who was also a ship's captain. He married a lady whose name is given as Wenche Dischington, the daughter of a Scotchman naturalized in Norway. This Henrik Ibsen settled in Skien, and had a son of the same name who married a German wife. All these Ibsens were sailors. Henrik Ibsen's son, Knud Ibsen, the dramatist's father, like his father married a wife of German extraction, Maria

<sup>1</sup>This island, I may note in passing, is the home of a black-haired race, very unlike the typical Norsemen, and which has been identified with those "black strangers" spoken of by the Irish chroniclers who described the Viking invasions.

Cornelia Altenburg, the daughter of a merchant who had begun life as a sailor.

This ancestry is very significant. It will be seen that Ibsen is on both sides predominantly German, and that in his German and Danish blood there is an interesting Scotch strain. The tendency to philosophic abstraction and the strenuous earnestness, mingling with the more characteristically northern imaginative influences, are explained by this German and Scotch ancestry; it explains also the peculiarly isolated and yet cosmopolitan attitude which marks Ibsen—why it is that his works have been so enthusiastically received and so easily naturalized in Germany, and why, now that they are beginning to be known, they promise to make so deep an impression in our own land.

Ibsen's mother possessed a shy, silent, and solitary nature, which she imparted to her son. One of her daughters thus describes her: "She was a quiet, lovable woman, the soul of the house, devoted to her husband and children. She was always sacrificing herself. There was no bitterness or reproach in her." The father was of cheerful disposition, a man of sociable tastes, popular in his circle, but also feared, for he had a keen wit, and, like his son, he could use it unmercifully.

Knud Ibsen's eldest son, Henrik,<sup>1</sup> was born

<sup>1</sup> Many books and pamphlets dealing with his life and works have appeared in Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. The chief of these are Vasenius's "Henrik Ibsen, ett Skaldeporträtt," Stockholm, 1882; Passarge's "Henrik Ibsen: Ein

at Skien, a busy little town of some 3,000 inhabitants occupied in the timber trade, on the 20th March, 1828. "I was born," the dramatist writes in some reminiscences published by Mr. Jaeger for the first time, "in a house in the market-place, Stockmann's house it was then called. The house lay right opposite the church with its high steps and large tower. To the right, in front of the church, stood the town pillory, and to the left the town-hall, the lockup, and the 'madhouse.' The fourth side of the market-place was occupied by the Latin school and the town school. The church lay free in the middle. This prospect was the first view of the earth that presented itself to my eyes. All buildings; no green, no rural open landscape." It was in the church tower that the baby Henrik received his first conscious and deep impression. The nursemaid took him up and held him out (to the horror of his mother below), and he never forgot that new and strange vision of the world from above. Ibsen goes on to describe the attractions which were held for him in the gloomy town-hall and the pillory, unused for many years, a red-brown post of about a man's height, with a great round knob which had originally been painted black, but which then looked like a human face. In front of the post hung an iron chain, and in that

Beitrag zur neusten Geschichte der norwegischen National-literatur," Leipsic, 1883; and H. Jaeger's "Henrik Ibsen, 1828-1888," Copenhagen. The last-named, now translated, is by far the best.

an iron ring which seemed like two small arms ready to clasp the child's neck on the least provocation. And then there was the town-hall. That, too, had high steps like the church, and underneath it was the jail with its barred windows: "inside the bars I have seen many pale and dark faces." And then there was the "madhouse," which in its time had really been used to confine lunatics. That also was barred, but inside the bars the little window was filled by a massive iron plate with small round holes like a sieve. This place was said to have been the abode of a famous criminal who had been branded.

These early impressions of the dramatist—the church tower, the pillory, the barred windows, the pale criminals—are of no little interest. They help to explain for us the somber and tragic cast, purely human and reflective, of Ibsen's character. They explain, too, the absence in his work of the sea and the forest, of those things which give such a sweet, wild aroma, now and again, to the work of Björnson and Lie. The little town, with its active commercial life and its equally active religious life—for Skien was a center of pietistic influence—was such a place as is brought before us in "De Unges Forbund" and in "Samfundets Stötter," and it was a fit birthplace for the author of "Brand."

Knud Ibsen belonged to the aristocracy of Skien, and his house was a center of its social

life. When Henrik was eight years old there was an end of this, for his father became a bankrupt. After the catastrophe the family retired to a small and humble home outside Skien, where they lived with a frugality which was in marked contrast with their former life. There can be no doubt that this sudden change of circumstances, and the insight which it brought into the social cleavage of a provincial town, counted for much in Ibsen's development. It is certain that at this period his marked individuality began to be perceived. He did not play like the other children; while they romped in the yard, he retired into a little inclosure in an alley that led to the kitchen, and barricaded himself against the heedless incursions of the younger members of the family. Here he kept guard, not only in summer, but in the depth of winter. It is clear that even at this early age Ibsen had reached the point of proud isolation and defiance of his fellow-citizens which Stockmann ultimately attained. One of his sisters describes how they used to throw stones and snowballs at his retreat to make him come out to join their play, but when he could no longer withstand the attack and yielded to the assailants, he could display no skill in any kind of sport, and soon retired again to his den. Reading appears to have been one of his chief occupations there, and Jaeger assures us that the words which many years afterwards Ibsen put into the mouth of the little girl Hedwig,



who is so pathetic and tender a figure in one of his latest dramas, "Vildanden," contain a reminiscence of childhood. "And do you read the books?" asked Gregers. "Oh, yes, when I can. But most of them are English, and I can't read those. But then I can look at the pictures. There is one big black book, called Harryson's 'History of London'; it must be a hundred years old, and that has such a number of pictures in it. First there is a picture of Death with an hourglass and a girl. I think that is hideous. But then there are all sorts of other pictures, with churches and castles and streets and great ships that sail on the sea." He also amused himself with pencil and color-box. Meanwhile he went to school, going through the usual course and learning a little Latin; he appears to have taken a special interest in the Biblical instruction. At fourteen he was confirmed, and the time came for him to make his way in the world.

At this period he wished to become a painter; he devoted himself with zeal to drawing, and an interest in painting has remained with him, the formation of an excellent little collection of Renaissance pictures becoming in later life one of his chief hobbies. In the existing state of the family means, this career was out of the question, and he was sent to an apothecary at Grimstad, a little town containing at that time not more than 800 inhabitants. The apothecary's shop, Jaeger remarks, is the place where all the

loungers meet in the evening to discuss the events of the day, and doubtless the apothecary's shop was an element in the education of the future dramatist. In his interesting preface to the second edition of "Catilina" he has himself described the five years of development that he went through in this little town. He did not wish to become a chemist; he would become a student and study medicine. At the same time his poetical activity and the eventful year of 1848 came to arouse in the silent, solitary boy a healthy interest in the outside world.

It was while reading Sallust and Cicero for his matriculation examination that he conceived, and wrote at midnight, his first play, "Catilina." With the help of two enthusiastic young friends the tragedy was published and some thirty copies sold—a result which did not permit of the proposed tour in the East on which the three friends had decided to expend the profits of the sale. Ibsen was now in his twenty-second year, and he came up to Christiania to carry on his studies at the school of Heltberg, who seems to have had a singularly stimulating influence on young men, and at the university. Here Ibsen was the comrade of Björnson, Jonas Lie, and others who have since become famous. At a later date Björnson condensed his youthful impression of his friend in two vigorous lines:

"Tense and lean, the color of gypsum,  
Behind a vast coal-black beard, Henrik Ibsen."

The period now arrived at which Ibsen's career was definitely settled. He had been making several unsuccessful literary attempts at Christiania, having finally abandoned the intention to study medicine, when, in 1851, the famous violinist, Ole Bull, who has done so much to give artistic shape and energy to the modern Norwegian spirit, gave him an appointment at the National Theater which he had recently established at Bergen. Ibsen's prentice hand was now trained by the writing of several dramas not included among his published works; and, like Shakespeare and Molière in somewhat similar circumstances, he here acquired his mastery of the technical demands of dramatic form. In 1855 his apprenticeship may be said to have ended, and he produced "*Fru Inger til Östraat*" (Dame Inger of Östraat), an historical prose drama of great energy and concentration. In 1858 he married Susanna Thoresen, the daughter of a Bergen clergyman, whose second wife, Magdalene Thoresen, is a well-known authoress. At the same period he was appointed artistic director of the Norwegian theater at Christiania, a post previously occupied by Björnson, who had just inaugurated the Norwegian peasant novel by the publication of "*Synnöve Solbakken*." In 1864, having acquired the means, Ibsen found it desirable to quit the somewhat provincial and uncongenial atmosphere of his native country, and has since lived in Rome, in Ischia, in

Dresden, and at other places, but mainly at Munich, producing on an average a drama every two years. In 1885 he revisited Norway. Time had brought its revenges, and he was enthusiastically received everywhere. At Drontheim he made a remarkable speech to a club of workingmen. "Mere democracy," he said, "cannot solve the social question. An element of aristocracy must be introduced into our life. Of course I do not mean the aristocracy of birth or of the purse, or even the aristocracy of intellect. I mean the aristocracy of character, of will, of mind. That only can free us. From two groups will this aristocracy I hope for come to our people—from our women and our workmen. The revolution in the social condition, now preparing in Europe, is chiefly concerned with the future of the workers and the women. In this I place all my hopes and expectations; for this I will work all my life and with all my strength." In private conversation, it is said, Ibsen describes himself as a Socialist, although he has not identified himself with any definite school of Socialism.

In personal appearance he is rather short, but impressive and very vigorous. He has a peculiarly broad and high forehead, with small, keen, blue-gray eyes "which seem to penetrate to the heart of things." His firm and compressed mouth is characteristic of "the man of the iron will," as he has been called by a fellow-countryman. Altogether it is a remarkable and

significant face, clear-seeing and alert, with a decisive energy of will about it that none can fail to recognize. It is far indeed from the typical "pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face." In middle age it recalled, rather, the faces of some of our most distinguished surgeons; as is perhaps meet in the case of a writer who has used so skillful and daring a scalpel to cut to the core of social diseases. In society, although he likes talking to the common people, Ibsen is usually reserved and silent; or his conversation deals with the most ordinary topics; "he talks like a wholesale tradesman," it has been said.

Ibsen's dramas (excluding two or three which have not been published) may be conveniently divided into three groups, but the division is a rough one, for the groups merge one into another; Ibsen's artistic development has been gradual and continuous—I. Historical and Legendary Dramas, chiefly in Prose: The youthful "Catilina" (written in 1850, but revised at a later period), which stands by itself, and contains the germ of much of his later work; "Fru Inger til Østraat" (Dame Inger of Østraat), 1855, an effective melodramatic play of great technical skill; "Gildet paa Solhaug" (The Feast at Solhaug), an historical play of the fourteenth century, written in 1855, and reprinted in 1883, with a preface explaining its genesis; "Hærmændene paa Helgeland" (The Warriors at Helgeland), 1858, a noble version

of the Volsunga-Saga, here brought down to more historical times, so as to present a vivid and human picture of the Viking period; "Kongs-emnerne" (The Pretenders), 1864, dealing with Norwegian history in the twelfth century; "Keiser og Galilær" (Emperor and Galilean), finished in 1873, but begun many years earlier. 2. Dramatic Poems: "Kjærlighedens Komædie" (Love's Comedy), 1862; "Brand," 1866; "Peer Gynt," 1867. 3. Social Dramas: "De Unges Forbund" (The Young Men's League), 1869; "Samfundets Støtter" (The Pillars of Society), 1877; "Et Dukkehjem" (A Doll's House), 1879; "Gengangere" (Ghosts), 1881; "En Folkefiende" (An Enemy of Society), 1882; "Vildanden" (The Wild Duck), 1884; "Rosmersholm," 1886; "Fruen fra Havet" (The Lady from the Sea), 1888.

"Hærmændene paa Helgeland" is Ibsen's first great drama; it has, indeed, been called the most perfect of his plays. The antique form and substance which he imposed upon himself compelled him to a severe self-restraint; the style also of the drama, which is in prose, is austere simple and strong. Yet there is at the same time a curious and undisguised modern note about this work, and we feel throughout the presence of that spirit which gives life to Ibsen's plays of to-day. The strong, passionate figure of Hjordis fills most of the field, however finely the lesser figures are molded.

She is the Brunhild of the ancient story, yet she is the same woman who is the heroine and the hero of all Ibsen's social dramas; a strong and passionate woman, instinct with suppressed energy to which the natural outlets have been closed, and which is transformed into volcanic outbreaks of disaster. "A woman, a woman," she says to Dagny, who is shocked at a remark about using the armor and weapons of a man, and mixing among men, "there is no one who knows what a woman can do." Her father having been slain, she is brought as a young girl into the conqueror's household. She finds a temporary satisfaction in the exercise of her physical strength. When the mild and honorable warrior Sigurd comes with his feeble friend Gunnar, both fall in love with her, and she, without speaking it, returns Sigurd's love. She promises to give herself to him who can perform the greatest feat of strength, and Sigurd, by a ruse, wins her for his friend Gunnar, himself taking to wife the gentle Dagny. Henceforth there is something strange and incalculable in all the deeds of Hjördis, and a concentrated bitterness in her words. When afterwards she learns that Sigurd had once loved her, the proud and reserved woman offers in vain to put on helmet and breastplate and to follow him through the earth. "I have been homeless in the world from the day that you took another to wife. Ill was that deed of yours. All good gifts may a man give to his

truthful friend,—all, but not the woman he holds dear. When he does that deed, he breaks the thread that the Norns have spun, and wastes two lives.” Hjördis is the woman of the social dramas, but it has not yet occurred to her that she has a life of her own.

“Emperor and Galilean,”<sup>1</sup> although historical and written in prose, is very unlike “Hærmændene paa Helgeland”; it belongs, indeed, in date as well as in character, almost as much to the second group. It is made up of two five-act dramas, presenting a series of brilliant and powerful scenes in the life of the Emperor Julian, lacking, however, dramatic unity and culminating interest. It is probable that the disconnected character of the work, and its undue length, is owing to the long period which intervened between its commencement in Norway and its completion at Rome. It is, in its parts, undoubtedly a fascinating work; we trace Julian’s life from his youth as a student of philosophy to his death as Emperor conquered by the Galilean. The interest of his life lies in his various relations to the growing Christianity and decaying Paganism by which he is surrounded. Julian realizes the possibility of a third religion—“the reconcilia-

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that this was the first of Ibsen’s dramas to be translated into English, by Miss Catherine Ray, in 1876. To Mr. Gosse belongs the honor of having first introduced Ibsen to English readers, in an article in the “Fortnightly,” in 1874. The first of his social dramas to be translated into English was “The Doll’s House” (under the title of “Nora”), by Miss Frances Lord in 1882.



tion between nature and spirit, the return to nature through spirit: that is the task for humanity." But he imagines that he is himself the divine representative of this new religion. His friend Maximus prophesies at the end "The third kingdom shall come! The spirit of man shall take its inheritance once more." Julian failed because he was weak and vain, and because the age was against him; he dies with the cry on his lips, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

"Love's Comedy," the earliest of the poems of the second group, is the first work in which Ibsen's characteristic modern tone appears, not again to vanish. It is a satire on the various conventional phases of love, exquisite in form but comparatively slight in texture. In "Brand" Ibsen produced a poem which for imagination and somber energy stands alone. It is perhaps the most widely known of all his works; in Germany it has already found four translators, and there is reason to hope that before long a translation will appear in England. "Brand" is the tragedy of will and self-sacrifice in the service of the ideal—a narrow ideal, but less narrow, Ibsen seems sometimes to hint, than the ideals of most of us. The motto on which Brand acts in all the crises of his life is, "All or nothing"; and with him it means in every case the crushing of some human emotion or relationship for the fulfillment of a religious duty. Soon after the commencement of the

poem Brand became the pastor of a gloomy little northern valley, between mountains and glaciers, into which the sun seldom penetrates. He is accompanied by his wife Agnes, a pathetic image of love and devotion. A child is born to them, but soon dies in this sun-forsaken valley. There are few passages in literature of more penetrating pathos than the scene in the fourth act in which, one Christmas eve, the first anniversary of the child's death, Brand persuades Agnes to give her Alf's clothes—the last loved relics—to a beggar-woman who comes to the door with her child during a snow-storm. Soon Agnes also dies. In the end, stoned by his flock, Brand makes his way, bleeding, up into the mountains. Here, amid the wild rocks and his own hallucinations, he is met by a mad girl who mistakes him for the thorn-crowned Christ. This scene, in which, overwhelmed at last by an avalanche, Brand dies amid his broken ideals, attains an imaginative height not elsewhere reached in modern literature, and for the like of which we have to look back to the great scene on the heath in "Lear." Here and elsewhere, however, Ibsen brings in supernatural voices, which scarcely heighten the natural grandeur of the scene, and which seem out of place altogether in a poem so entirely modern. "Brand" brings before us a wealth of figures and of discussions, carried on in brief, clear, musical, though irregular, metrical form.

and it would be impossible to analyze so complex a work within moderate compass.

"Peer Gynt" is regarded in his own country as Ibsen's most important achievement, for it is a great modern national epic, the Scandinavian "Faust." A successful attempt has even been made to represent it on the stage, the incidental music being composed by Grieg. The name of its hero and many incidents in his career have their home in old Norwegian folk-lore, and Ibsen has himself declared that Peer Gynt is intended as the representative of the Norwegian people. Peer is the child of imagination who lives in a world in which fantasy and reality can scarcely be distinguished. He is an egoist with colossal ambitions; at the same time he is by no means wanting in worldly wisdom; he goes to America, and makes a large fortune (later on suddenly lost) by the importation of slaves and the exportation of idols to China, a trade which he reconciles to his conscience by opening up another branch of business for supplying missionaries (at a considerable profit) with Bibles and rum. The whole is a series of scenes and adventures, often fantastic or symbolic in character, always touched by that profound irony which is Ibsen's most marked feature. One scene is so original and penetrative that it stands alone in literature. It is that scene of peculiarly Norwegian essence in which Peer Gynt enters the hut in which his mother lies dying, with the fire on

the hearth and the old tom-cat on a stool at the bottom of the bed. He talks to her in the tone of the days of childhood, reminding her how they used to play at driving to the fairy-tale castle of Soria Moria. He sits at the foot of the bed, throws a string round the stool on which the cat lies, takes a stick in his hand, imagines a journey to Heaven—the altercation with St. Peter at the gate, the deep bass voice of God declaring that Mother Aase shall enter free—and lulls her to death with the stories with which she had once lulled him to sleep. At a much later date in his career Peer finds himself in a madhouse at Cairo, where he is assured that his own guiding principle of the self-sufficiency of the individual, without regard for the actions or opinions of others, is carried out to its extreme limits. He is here acclaimed as emperor and crowned with a garland of straw. Thus are his dreams of power fulfilled. In the end he returns, a white-haired old man, to be eagerly welcomed by the faithful Solveig, whom, as a girl, he had forsaken, and who is now an old woman, still waiting for him with the kingdom of love that he had missed. The poem ends with the picture of Solveig singing over her lover a cradle-song of death. The failure of an over-mastering imagination and weak will to attain the love that alone satisfies, that is the last lesson of this marvelous work, so full of manifold meaning.

It is certainly by the third and latest group

—the Social Dramas—that Ibsen has attracted most attention both in his own country and abroad. They are all written in mature life, and he has here devoted his early acquired mastery of the technical requirements of the drama, as well as the later acquired experiences of men, to a keen criticism of the social life of to-day. He himself, it is said, regards these plays as his chief title to remembrance. It is scarcely possible to say so much as this when we think of “Hærmændene paa Helgeland,” of “Brand,” and of “Peer Gynt.” But it certainly does not befit us of to-day to complain that Ibsen has devoted his most mature art to work which has a significance which to-day at all events cannot be over-estimated. That significance may be very easily set forth; the spirit that works through Ibsen’s latest dramas is the same that may be detected in his earliest, “Catilina”; it is an eager insistence that the social environment shall not cramp the reasonable freedom of the individual, together with a passionately intense hatred of all those conventional lies which are commonly regarded as “the pillars of society.” But this impulse that underlies nearly all Ibsen’s dramas of the last group is always under the control of a great dramatic artist. The dialogue is brief and incisive; every word tells, and none is superfluous; there is no brilliant play of dialogue for its own sake. “The illusion I wish to produce,” he has himself said, “is that of truth itself. I

want to produce upon the reader the impression that what he is reading is actually taking place before him." In the hands of a meaner artist such an attempt would be fatal; to Ibsen it has brought greater strength. If there is fault to find in the construction of Ibsen's prose dramas, it lies in their richness of material; the subsidiary episodes are frequently dramas in themselves, although duly subordinate to the main purpose of the play. The care lavished on the development and episodes of these dramas is equaled by the reality and variety of the persons presented. These are never mere embodied "humors" or sarcastic caricatures; the terrible keenness of Ibsen's irony comes of the simple truth and moderation with which he describes these social humbugs who are yet so eminently reasonable and like ourselves. Every figure brought before us, even the most insignificant, is an organic and complex personality, to be recognized without trick or catchword.

"The Young Men's League," the earliest of the series, deals with the rise and progress of one Stensgaard. He is a man whose character is essentially vulgar and commonplace, but who is undoubtedly clever, and whose ambition it is to gain political success. At the same time he is short-sighted, conceited, absolutely wanting in tact. He is even unstable, save in the great central aim of his life, which he seeks to bring about by the formation of a compact majority of voters, of which the nucleus is the Young

**Men's League.** Stensgaard is always at his best as an orator; he is a Numa Roumestan, genial, almost childishly open-hearted, with a flow of facile emotion and a great mastery of phrases. We leave him under a cloud of contempt but nowise defeated; and we are given to understand that he is on his way to the highest offices of state. In this vivid and skillful portrait of the representative leader of semi-democratized societies, Ibsen has given his chief utterance on current political methods. It is scarcely favorable. He realizes that government by party mobs, each headed by a Stensgaard—a phase in the progress towards complete democratization illustrated in England to-day—is by no means altogether satisfactory. "A party," remarks Dr. Stockmann, in "An Enemy of Society," "is like a sausage-machine: it grinds all the heads together in one mash." Something more fundamental even than party government is needed, and in some words written in 1870 Ibsen has briefly expressed what he conceives to be the pith of the matter:—

"The coming time—how all our notions will fall into the dust then! And truly it is high time. All that we have lived on up till now has been the remnants of the revolutionary dishes of the last century, and we have been long enough chewing these over and over again. Our ideas demand a new substance and a new interpretation. Liberty, equality, and fra-

ternity are no longer the same things that they were in the days of the blessed guillotine; but it is just this that the politicians will not understand, and that is why I hate them. These people only desire partial revolutions, revolutions in externals, in politics. But these are mere trifles. There is only one thing that avails—to revolutionize people's minds.

He is not an aristocrat of the school of Carlyle, eager to put everything beneath the foot of a Cromwell or a Bismarck. The great task for democracy is, as Rosmer says in "Rosmersholm," "to make every man in the land a nobleman." "The State must go!" Ibsen wrote to G. Brandes in 1870. "That will be a revolution which will find me on its side. Undermine the idea of the State, set up in its place spontaneous action, and the idea that spiritual relationship is the only thing that makes for unity, and you will start the elements of a liberty which will be something worth possessing." It is only by the creation of great men and women, by the enlargement to the utmost of the reasonable freedom of the individual, that the realization of Democracy is possible. And herein, as in other fundamental matters, Ibsen is at one with the American, with whom he would appear at first sight to have little in common. "Where the men and women think lightly of the laws; . . . where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons; . . .



where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority; where the citizen is always the head and ideal; where children are taught to be laws to themselves; . . . there the great city stands!" exclaims Walt Whitman.

In "The Pillars of Society"—which was separated from "The Young Men's League" by the appearance of "Emperor and Galilean"—Ibsen pours delicious irony on those conventional lies which are regarded as the foundations of social and domestic life. Here also he presents us with one of the most eminent of the group of "governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters" that throughout these plays strive to act as the pillars of the social system. Straamand in "Love's Comedy," Manders in "Ghosts," the schoolmaster, Rör-lund, here, with many minor figures scattered through other plays, notwithstanding slight differences, are closely allied. The clergyman is for Ibsen the supreme representative and exponent of conventional morality. Yet the dramatist never falls into the mistake of some of his Scandinavian contemporaries who make their clerical figures mere caricatures. Here, as always, it is because it is so reasonable and truthful that Ibsen's irony is so keen. Rör-lund is honest and conscientious, but the thinnest veils of propriety are impenetrable to him; he can see nothing but the obvious and external aspects of morality; he is incapable of grasping

a new idea, or of sympathizing with any natural instinct or generous emotion; it is his part to give utterance, impressive with the sanction of religion, to the traditional maxims of the society he morally supports. Pastor Manders, in "Ghosts," is less fluent than Rörhund, and of stronger character. His training and experience have fitted him to deal in all dignity with the proprieties and conventions of social morality; but when he is in the presence of the realities of life, or when a generous human thought or emotion flashes out before him, he shrinks back, shocked and cowed. He is then, as Mrs. Alving says, nothing but a great child. That Ibsen is, in his clerical personages, as some have said, covertly attacking Protestantism, it is not necessary to assert. It is the traditional morality, of which the priesthood everywhere are the chief and authorized exponents, with which he is chiefly concerned. His attitude towards Christianity generally we may perhaps gather from the intensity of feeling with which Julian, in "Emperor and Galilean," expresses his passionate repugnance to its doctrine of the evil of human nature and its policy of suppression. "You can never understand it, you," he continues, "who have never been in the power of this God-Man. It is more than a doctrine which he has spread over the world; it is a charm which has fettered the senses. Whoever falls once into his hands—I think he never becomes free again. We

are like vines planted in a foreign soil; plant us back again and we should perish; yet we languish in this new earth."

"A Doll's House" contains Ibsen's most elaborate portrait of a woman, and it is his chief contribution to the elucidation of the questions relating to the social functions and position of women in the modern world. It is the tragedy of marriage, and on this ground it has excited much discussion, and is perhaps the most widely known of Ibsen's social dramas. As a work of art it is probably the most perfect of them. He has here thrown off the last fragments of that conventionality in treatment which frequently mars the two previous plays, and has reached the full development of his own style. The play is an organic whole, all its parts are intimately bound together, and every step in the development is vital and inevitable. Nora herself, the occupant of the doll's house, is a being whose adult instincts have been temporarily arrested by the influences which have made her an overgrown child. She is the daughter of a frivolous official of doubtful honesty; she has been fed on those maxims of conventional morality of which Rörlund is so able an exponent; and her chief recreation has been in the servants' room. She is now a mother, and the wife of a man who shields her carefully from all contact with the world. He refrains from sharing with her his work or his troubles; he fosters all her childish

instincts; she is a source of enjoyment to him, a precious toy. He is a man of æsthetic tastes, and his love for her has something of the delight that one takes in a work of art. Nora's conduct is the natural outcome of her training and experience. She tells lies with facility; she flirts almost recklessly to attain her own ends; when money is concerned her conceptions of right are so elementary that she forges her father's name. But she acts from the impulses of a loving heart; her motives are always good; she is not conscious of guilt. Her education in life has not led her beyond the stage of the affectionate child with no sense of responsibility. But the higher instincts are latent within her; and they awake when the light of day at length penetrates her doll's house, and she learns the judgment of the world, of which her husband now stands forth as the stern interpreter. In the clash and shock of that moment she realizes that her marriage has been no marriage, that she has been living all these years with a "strange man," and that she is no fit mother for her children. She leaves her home, not to return until, as she says, to live with her husband will be a real marriage. Will she ever return?—The Norwegian poets, it has been said, like to end their dramas, as such end in life, with a note of interrogation.

Nora is one of a group of women, more or less highly developed, who are distributed throughout Ibsen's later plays. They stand, in

their stagnant conventional environment, as, either instinctively or intelligently, actually or potentially, the representatives of freedom and truth; they contain the promise of a new social order. The men in these plays, who are able to estimate their social surroundings at a just value, have mostly been wounded or paralyzed in the battle of life; they stand by, half-cynical, and are content to be merely spectators. But the women—Selma, Lona, Nora, Mrs. Alving, Rebecca—are full of unconquerable energy. There is a new life in their breasts that surges, often tumultuously, into very practical expression.

As "The Doll's House" is the tragedy of marriage, so "Ghosts" is the tragedy of heredity. This wonderful play is the logical outcome and continuation of "The Doll's House." Mrs. Alving is a Nora who had resolved to cling to her husband in spite of all, and here is the result. She is a woman of energy and intellect, who has managed the estate, and devoted herself successfully to the task of creating an artificial odor of sanctity around the memory of her late husband. At the same time she has been gradually throwing aside the precepts of the morality in which she has been educated, and has learned to think for herself. When her son Oswald returns home, in reality dying of disease that has been latent from his birth, he seems to her the ghost of his father. His own life has been free from

**excess**, but he now drinks too much; and he begins to make love to the girl who is really his half-sister, exactly as his father had done to her mother in the same place. The scene finally closes over the first clear signs of his madness. The irony of the play is chiefly brought about by the involuntary agency of Pastor Manders, the consummate flower of conventional morality, and in the few hours which the action covers the tragedy of heredity is slowly and relentlessly unfolded, with the vanity of all efforts to conceal or suppress the great natural forces of life.

In "Ghosts," it seems to me, Ibsen reached the highest point of his art. He deals here with commonplace characters and everyday scenes; most of the action is conveyed in mere drawing-room dialogue; but we feel how the clearness and completeness of this play, its tragic intensity, its immense concentration, have at the back the whole of Ibsen's various achievement. When we reach the end we experience that prolonged shudder of horror, in which, as Aristotle said, the purification of tragedy lies, and we involuntarily recall whatever is most awful in literature, the "Oresteia" of Æschylus, Shakespeare's "Macbeth," Shelley's "Cenci." It is only on more intimate acquaintance that we are able to look beyond the horror of it, and that we realize here, better than elsewhere, how Ibsen has absorbed the scientific influences of his time, the attitude of unlimited

simplicity and trust in the face of reality. "I almost think," Mrs. Alving says, "that we are all of us ghosts, Pastor Manders. It is not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that 'walks' in us,—it is all sorts of dead ideas and lifeless old beliefs and so forth. They have no vitality, but they cling to us all the same, and we can't get rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. There must be ghosts all the country over, as thick as the sand of the sea." There is the absolute acceptance of facts, however disagreeable. But, beside it, is the hope that lies in the skillful probing of the wound that the ignorant have foolishly smothered up; the hope also that lies in a glad trust of nature and of natural instincts. Nowhere else in Ibsen's work can we feel so strong and invigorating a breath of new life.

"An Enemy of Society" is closely connected in its origin with "Ghosts." When "Ghosts" was published it aroused fierce antagonism. Such a subject was not suited, it was said, to artistic treatment. The discussion was foolish enough; the wise saying of Goethe still remains true, that "no real circumstance is unpoetic so long as the poet knows how to use it." All the worthy people, however, in whose name Pastor Manders is entitled to speak, declared, further, that the play was immoral—as it certainly is from their point of view—and it was some time before its first representation on the stage, with

the distinguished northern actor, Lindberg, in the part of Oswald. Ibsen had expected a storm, but the storm was even greater than he had anticipated; and in the history of Dr. Stockmann he has given an artistic version of his own experiences at this time. It is pleasant that the only figure in these plays that we can intimately associate with Ibsen himself is that of the manly and genial Stockmann. When he discovers that the water at the Baths, of which he is the medical director, and which are the chief cause of the town's prosperity, are infected and producing disastrous results to the invalids, he resolves that the matter shall at once be made known and remedied. It is in the shock of the universal disapprobation that this resolution arouses that our genial and homely doctor is lifted into heroism, and becomes the mouthpiece of truths with far-reaching significance. The great scene in the fourth act, in which he calls a public meeting as the only remaining way to make his discovery public, and, amid general clamor, sets forth his opinions, is one of the most powerful and genuinely dramatic that Ibsen has ever written.

"The Wild Duck" is, as a drama, the least remarkable of Ibsen's plays of this group. There is no central personage who absorbs our attention, and no great situation. For the first time also we detect a certain tendency to mannerism, and the dramatist's love of symbolism, here centered in the wild duck, becomes ob-



trusive and disturbing. Yet this play has a distinct and peculiar interest for the student of Ibsen's works. The satirist who has so keenly pursued others has never spared himself; in the lines that he has set at the end of the charming little volume in which he has collected his poems, he declares that, "to write poetry is to hold a doomsday over oneself." Or, as he has elsewhere expressed it: "All that I have written corresponds to something that I have lived through, if not actually experienced. Every new poem has served as a spiritual process of emancipation and purification." In both "Brand" and "Peer Gynt" we may detect this process. In "The Wild Duck" Ibsen has set himself on the side of his enemies, and written, as a kind of anti-mask to "The Doll's House" and "The Pillars of Society," a play in which, from the standpoint to which the dramatist has accustomed us, everything is topsy-turvy. Gregers Werle is a young man, possessing something of the reckless will-power of Brand, who is devoted to the claims of the ideal, and who is doubtless an enthusiastic student of Ibsen's social dramas. On returning home after a long absence he learns that his father has provided for a cast-off mistress by marrying her to an unsuspecting man who is an old friend of Gregers'. He resolves at once that it is his duty at all costs to destroy the element of falsehood in this household, and to lay the foundations of a true marriage. His

interference ends in disaster; the weak average human being fails to respond properly to "the claims of the ideal;" while Werle's father, the chief pillar of conventional society in the play, spontaneously forms a true marriage, founded on mutual confessions and mutual trust. If the play may be regarded, not quite unfairly, as a burlesque of possible deductions from the earlier plays, it witnesses also, like "Ghosts," to Ibsen's profound conviction that all vital development must be spontaneous and from within, conditioned by the nature of the individual.

In "The Wild Duck" Ibsen approaches in his own manner, without, however, much insistence, the moral aspects of the equality of the sexes. Is a woman, who has had no relationships with a man before marriage, entitled to expect the same in her husband? Is a man, who has had relationships with other women before marriage, entitled to complain if his wife has also had such relationships? These are the sort of questions which the Scandinavian and Danish dramatists—Björnson, Eduard Brandes, Charlotte Edgren, Benzon—seem never tired of discussing. Eduard Brandes makes his admirable little drama "Et Besög," published about the same time as "Vildanden," hang on this problem, and although he brings no new idea into the play, he settles the question in the same spirit as his great fellow-dramatist. "En Hanske," also published about

the same time, gives us Björnson's contribution to the question. In this play a young woman is in love with a young man who, as she learns accidentally at the moment of formally engaging herself to him, has had previous relationships with other women. At the same time she discovers that her own father, an amiable old *élégant*, has been frequently unfaithful to his wife, and that her mother still carries about a suppressed bitterness. The girl realizes that life is not like what she has been brought up to believe; she rejects her lover, and after some unexpected and quite unnecessary brutalities from him, flings her glove in his face. All Björnson's genial vivacity and emotional expansiveness come out in the earlier scenes of this play, and there is some pleasant comedy, especially when the easy-going father tries to lecture his daughter, to the accompaniment of her acute comments and the wife's sarcastic exclamations, on wife's privileges. "Here," he says, "is woman's noblest calling." "As what?" asks the daughter. "As what?—Have you not listened? As—as the ennobling influence in marriage, as that which makes man purer, as, as——" "Soap?" "Soap? what on earth makes you think of soap?" "You make out that marriage is a great laundry for men. We girls are to stand ready, each at her wash-tub, with her piece of soap. Is that how you mean it?" On this ground, however, it is difficult to avoid comparisons with Ibsen, and

we miss here both the artistic and moral grip of the greater dramatist. Ibsen's solution of the matter in "The Wild Duck" seems to be that there can be no true marriage without mutual knowledge and mutual confession.

In "Rosmersholm," social questions have passed into the background: they are present, indeed, throughout; and to some extent they cause the tragedy of the drama, as the numberless threads that bind a man to his past, and that cut and oppress him when he strives to take a step forward. But on this gray background the passionate figure of Rebecca West forms a vivid and highly-wrought portrait. Ibsen has rarely shown such intimate interest in the development of passion. The whole life and soul of this ardent, silent woman, whom we see in the first scene quietly working at her crochet, while the housekeeper prepares the supper, are gradually revealed to us in brief flashes of light between the subsidiary episodes, until at last she ascends and disappears down the inevitable path to the mill stream. The touches which complete this picture are too many and too subtle to allow of analysis; in the last scene Ibsen's concentrated prose reaches as high a pitch of emotional intensity as he has ever cared to attain.

"The Lady from the Sea" seems to carry us into an atmosphere rather different from that of the early social dramas. An element of melodrama mingles here with the social in-

terest, and makes this play one of the least characteristic, but certainly one of the most dramatically effective of the group. Ellida, a morbid, romantic young woman, whose mother died insane, has met before her marriage the second mate of an American ship, a "stranger;" he attracts her with all the charm of the wild life of the sea and the fascination of the unknown. Having perpetrated a more or less justifiable homicide, the second mate is compelled to flee, not before he has gone through a form of betrothal with Ellida. Subsequently she marries a well-meaning, commonplace widower, but she wanders helplessly and uselessly through life, like a mermaid among the children of men, still held, in spite of herself, by the old fascination of the sea. At length the mysterious "stranger" turns up again, resolved, if she wishes, to carry her off in spite of everything. She feels that she must be free—free to go or free to stay. The husband, naturally, refuses to hear of this, proposes to send the man about his business. At length he consents to allow her to choose as she will. Then at once she feels able to decide against the "stranger," who leaps over the wall and disappears. The charm is broken for ever, and she has the chance to make something of her life. The moral is evident: without freedom of choice there can be no real emancipation or development.

The men of our own great dramatic period

wrote plays which are the expression of mere gladness of heart and childlike pleasure in the splendid and various spectacle of the world. Hamlet and Falstaff, the tragic De Flores and the comic Simon Eyre, they are all merely parts of the play. It is all play. The breath of Ariosto's long song of delight and Boccaccio's virile joy in life was still on these men, and for the organization of society, or even for the development and fate of the individual save as a spectacle, they took little thought. In the modern world this is no longer possible; rather, it is only possible for an occasional individual who is compelled to turn his back on the world. Ibsen, like Aristophanes, like Molière, and like Dumas to-day, has given all his mature art and his knowledge of life and men to the service of ideas. "Overthrowing society means an inverted pyramid getting straight"—one of the audacious sayings of James Hinton—might be placed as a motto on the title-page of all Ibsen's later plays. His work throughout is the expression of a great soul crushed by the weight of an antagonistic social environment into utterance that has caused him to be regarded as the most revolutionary of modern writers.

An artist and thinker, whose gigantic strength has been nourished chiefly in solitude, whose works have been, as he himself says in one of his poems, "deeds of night," written from afar, can never be genuinely popular. Everything

that he writes is received in his own country with attention and controversy; but he is mistaken for a cynic and pessimist; he is not loved in Norway as Björnson is loved, although Björnson, in the fruitful dramatic activity of his second period, has but followed in Ibsen's steps;—just as Goethe was never so well understood and appreciated as Schiller. Björnson, with his genial exuberance, his popular sympathies and hopes, never too far in advance of his fellows, invigorates and refreshes like one of the forces of nature. He represents the summer side of his country, in its bright warmth and fragrance. Ibsen, standing alone in the darkness in front, absorbed in the problems of human life, indifferent to the aspects of external nature, has closer affinities to the stern winter-night of Norway. But there is a mighty energy in this man's work. The ideas and instincts, developed in silence, which inspire his art, are of the kind that penetrate men's minds slowly. Yet they penetrate surely, and are proclaimed at length in the market-place.

## TOLSTOI

### I

**R**USSIA is the natural mediator between Europe and Asia. It happens with the regularity of an ethnic law that every race partakes of the characteristics of neighboring races. The extinct Tasmanian, by his curious aberrations from the Australian type and approximation to that of Polynesia, furnished an unexpected anthropological problem that is still unsolved. Everywhere the same mysterious blending or transition may be witnessed. Apart from complexion, it has been said, many a Russian peasant might pass in Lahore or Benares as a native of the Ganges valley. Whatever the ethnologist may say, one way or another, as to the racial elements of the country, any one who approaches the study of Russian men and Russian things perpetually meets with traits that are not familiar to him as European, but which he may have already learnt to know as Asiatic. Nor is it only in the little traits of character and daily life that these Eastern influences appear; the language itself has close Oriental affinities, and the old Slavonic is nearly related to Sanscrit. In trying to make



Russia plain to ourselves, it is constantly necessary to sound this keynote.

A nation's instincts are revealed in its art. The complex history of the origin and development of Russian art is full of interest. "Russia," as Viollet le Duc wrote in his charming book, "L'Art russe," "has been a laboratory in which the arts coming from all parts of Asia have united to assume an intermediate form between the eastern and western worlds." The art of Russia has three great sources, the Scythian, the Byzantine, and the Mongolian, but when these are analyzed it is found that each of them consists largely, when not entirely, of Oriental elements. Not less than nine-tenths of these component elements, Persian, Greek, Hindu, Finnic, and others, may, in Viollet le Duc's opinion, be set down as Eastern. Sometimes the art of Russia seems to have been almost effaced by Byzantine or Hindu influences, yet it ultimately assimilated all these Eastern influences until it reached its highest point of development at the end of the sixteenth century. In the gilded bulbous domes we see Hindu influence. Persian influence was peculiarly strong; the beautiful Holy Gate of the Church of St. John at Rostoff, the work of sixteenth century Russian artists, is of thoroughly Persian character. All that Russia took from Central Asia and Persia strengthened her art, though it retained its own characteristics, shown partly by the love of splendor peculiar

to a youthful and semi-barbaric race, as in the fantastic magnificence of that "gigantic madrepore," the Church of Vassili Blagennoi in the Kremlin at Moscow; partly by a freedom of conception and variety of execution in which the native spirit found expression. Gothic art, with its whole gamut of notes, from divine aspiration to grotesque humor, remained absolutely alien. When Peter the Great introduced Latin and Teutonic influences, and German, Italian, English, above all, French elements poured into the country, an "official Russia" grew up, speaking a foreign language and having no contact with the nation. Russia remained the same, but the dissolution of Russian art was ensured.

The genuine Russian spirit seems not to have emerged distinctively into the region of great art until it was brought into the peculiarly modern and western shape of the novel by Gogol, the Ukranian Cossack. "Dead Souls" is the first great Russian example of the modern story-teller's art, and still the most popular. Oriental influences have ceased; in Gogol we find western, especially English, influences, but, unlike the literary tendencies of the last century, they are duly subordinated to elements that are essentially Russian. The direct simplicity of the Russian, his love of minute realistic detail, which seems to be expressed even in the ancient form of the Russian cross, his quietism, his profound human sympathy,

have all found adequate voice in the modern Russian novel. The Russian painters of to-day, and the artists in bronze, with their simple realism and constant research for the expression of life in action, have but followed in the steps of the Russian novel, which has, as its supreme representatives, Turgenev, Dostoievsky, and Tolstoi. Turgenev, so delicate and sensitive in his realism, with its atmosphere of ineffable melancholy, a Corot among novelists, as De Vogüé calls him, is great not only by the breadth and insight of his art, but by the unique position he holds in the development of Russian literature. The "Stories by a Hunter," published a few years before the emancipation of the serfs, to which they are supposed to have contributed, turned the Russian novel in the direction of peasant life. The study of the peasant which occupies so much attention in Russia to-day is much more than a mere fashion, for the peasant in Russia represents by far the chief element in the population; certainly the interest in him has already left an ineffaceable mark on those great Russian novelists whose influence is world-wide. Tolstoi, Gregorovitch, Tchadrine, and others, have drawn the *mujik* with the breadth and faithfulness of Millet, in every attitude of godlike strength, of pathetic resignation, of abject vice. In Dostoievsky, as in the poet Nekrassoff, this democratic element is more fundamental than in either Turgenev or Tolstoi. Dostoievsky's

profound science of the human heart could never get near enough to its primitive and instinctive elements. There are two or three scenes in "Recollections of the Dead House," of Dantesque awfulness, which seem to bring nearer to us than anything else the very flesh and spirit of humanity. Such is that scene of the convicts in the bath-room, close and crowded, until, on the reddened backs, beneath the stress of the heat and the steam, stand out clearly the old scars of whips and rods. In all Dostoievsky's books we are constantly irritated and fascinated by this same strange penetrating odor of humanity.

Russian art has always been very closely allied with religion, and the Russian is very religious. Ever since, a thousand years ago, the Muscovites swam by thousands into their rivers, headed by the chiefs, to receive Christian baptism, they seem to have taken great interest in religion. But their religion has a distinctive character. It has no clear demarcation from ordinary life, a characteristic that is reflected in the similarity of religious and secular art in Russia. More than this, unlike both the favorite religions of the Indian and of the Teutonic races, it is not largely mystical; it is simply a mystical communism. Sympathy and the need of comradeship, which seem to be deeply rooted in the national character, are the characteristics of Russian religion. "Pity for a fallen creature is a very national trait,"

wrote Gogol, and among the great Russian novelists, Dostoievsky, who is the most intensely Russian, is throughout penetrated by the passion of pity. This spirit shows itself in the remarkable sympathy with which, in Russian popular stories, the devil is treated. "He is represented," Stepniak remarks, "as the enemy of man, doing his best to drag him down into hell. But as this is his trade he cannot help it, and the people bear him no malice. He is a good devil after all." Of the three persons of the Christian Trinity, the second, most associated with images of love, appeals most to the Russian popular imagination. God the Father, as an austere personage, lacking in sympathy, is, on the other hand, regarded with indifferent, not to say hostile, feelings. This was well exemplified by the innocent remark of a venerable *mujik* in a remote part of the country: "What! Is the old fellow alive still?"

The Russian has yet changed but little. The Scythians, as we see them in the realistic repoussé work of the Nikopol vase of twenty-three centuries ago, are the Russian *mujiks* of to-day; the features and the dress have scarcely changed. They are, as Herodotus described them, a race very tenacious of their customs. The sorcerer still holds his own among them, while the orthodox pope, it is well known, is regarded with no reverence, but rather as a tradesman. Propitiatory sacrifices, it is said, are still paid by fishermen to the

river-gods, and families in the same way try to keep on good terms with the household deities. The ancient communistic land customs still flourish, together with the ineradicable belief that the land must be the property of every one. In some parts of the country it is not uncommon for a poor man to help himself to the corn of a rich man, the loan being repaid with interest in subsequent years. The deeply-rooted indifference of the people to external laws appears in the difficulty with which they have been induced to accept an officially recognized marriage ceremony, and in the indulgence which is still felt towards liberty, which is not always license, in such matters. In some parts of Russia, even to-day, it is said, a kind of *Pervigilium Veneris* is held periodically; the young people ascend a mountain to sing and to dance, after which it is *de rigueur* to separate and to spend the night in couples. The primitive matter-of-fact simplicity of the people, as well as their indifference to law and authority, is shown in an incident that is said to have occurred only a few years ago. The peasants in a certain village decided that it was not desirable for their widowed pope to live alone, but the priest of the Greek Church is not allowed to re-marry; therefore the peasants, having obtained the consent of a soldier's widow to be the pope's mistress, insisted on introducing her into his

house.<sup>1</sup> Such incidents often took place in the western Europe of five centuries ago.

We have to bear in mind these characteristics when we try to understand the great religious movements that are going on in Russia. In all these sects we see the tenacity with which the Russian people have clung to their inborn practical instincts of communism, fraternity, and sexual freedom. This religious movement is but another aspect of the spirit that shows itself in Nihilism, and it is a wider, deeper, and more interesting aspect. Both represent a profound antagonism to the State and to the official western methods of social organization promulgated by the State. Religious nonconformity dates far back into the Middle Ages, but to Peter the Great is owing the first great development of Russian sects. That Tsar, with his hatred of all things Russian, was naturally regarded by pious and patriotic Russians as Antichrist, and they perished, in thousands at a time, by their own hands, rather than submit to the western notions which, knout in hand, he tried to force upon them. On the soil of poverty, wretchedness and disease, which distinguishes Russia to-day from the rest of Europe, these religious sects have everywhere sprung up and flourished;

<sup>1</sup> I take this, and much of what follows, from N. Tsakni's interesting book, "La Russie Sectaire." It is scarcely necessary to refer the English reader to the valuable series of works in which Stepniak has set forth the condition of modern Russia.

some of an ascetic type, with Asiatic tendencies, belonging more especially to the north of Russia, such as those frantic devotees, the Skoptsy, who mutilate themselves after the manner of the Phrygian worshipers of Cybele; or of those sects, belonging more to the south, and rapidly gaining ground over the others, who desire to lead a life of reason and love, such as the Doukhobory, who recognize no more divinity in Jesus than resides in all men, deny all dogmas, ceremonies, authority, give equal rights to every man and woman, treat children with the same respect as the aged, practice free marriages, and are in their daily lives both more moral and more prosperous than their neighbors. One of the most recent of these sects is the Soutaieffsky, that first became generally known about 1880. Basil Soutaieff, an uneducated mason, belonging to the center of Russia, from his early years pondered and dreamed over the misery of the world. To obtain light he visited the priests, and one referred him to the Gospels. His zeal induced him to learn to read, and he studied the New Testament eagerly. One day he carried to the church the body of a young son for burial. The pope asked fifty kopecks for the ceremony; Soutaieff had only thirty, and the pope began to bargain with him over the corpse. Soutaieff indignantly took up the body and buried it in his own garden. From that time dated his criticism of the Church, and



side by side grew up also a criticism of the world. He observed in his own trade the tricks of commerce and the perpetual effort to amass money and to deceive the worker. He abandoned his work as a mason and returned from St. Petersburg to the country to cultivate the earth, distributing to the poor the money he had previously earned. But in the country he found, from pope to peasant, the same vices as in the town, and with no wish to found a new sect, he became, by example, as well as by precept, the teacher of a religion of universal love and pity.

Soutaieff rejects all ceremonies, including baptism and marriage (for which he substitutes a simple blessing and exhortation to a just life), and all those external manifestations of religion which render men hypocritical. At the same time he rejects all faith in angels or devils, or in the supernatural generally, and is absolutely indifferent to the question of a future life. We have to occupy ourselves with the establishment of happiness and justice on this earth; what happens above, he says, I cannot tell, never having been there; perhaps there is nothing but eternal darkness.

He recognizes that the moral regeneration of men is closely connected with social and economic questions. Private property is the source of the hatreds, jealousies, and miseries of men. The proprietors must give up the land of which they have arbitrarily gained

possession, and work for their living. But this end is to be gained, not by violence, but by persuasion; men will recognize the hypocrisy and injustice of their lives, and those who persist in evil will be shut out from the fraternal community. Soutaieff refused, at one period at all events, to pay taxes. Once he went to St. Petersburg to explain the state of things to the Emperor; great was his indignation when not only was an interview refused, but he was summarily expelled from the city. Soutaieff and his disciples refuse military service, for the men of all nations and religions are brothers: why should they quarrel?

This is the substance of Soutaieff's teaching. Large numbers of persons come to hear him, sometimes out of curiosity, more often as disciples. He leads the life of a simple peasant. One evening, it is said, on going to his barn, he found several men carrying away sacks of flour. Without saying a word, he entered the barn and found a sack that the robbers had not yet carried off. He pursued them, and on catching up with them, he said: "My brothers, you must be in need of bread; take the sack that you have forgotten." The following day the robbers brought back the flour, and asked Soutaieff's forgiveness.

He has himself summed up his teaching. "What is truth?" a hearer once asked him. "Truth," answered Soutaieff with conviction, "truth is love, in a common life."

## II

Every artist writes his own autobiography. Even Shakespeare's works contain a life of himself for those who know how to read it. There is little difficulty in reading Tolstoi's; moreover, it is very copious, and possesses the additional advantage of being written from at least two distinct points of view. It is seldom necessary to consult any other authority for the essential facts of his life and growth. "Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth," the earliest of his large books, and one of the most attractive, tells us all that we need to know of his early life. An English critic has remarked that, if Tolstoi has here described his boyhood, he must have been a very commonplace child. The early life of men of genius is rarely a record of precocities. The boy here described so minutely, with his abnormal sensitiveness, his shy awkwardness and profound admiration of the *comme il faut*, his perpetual self-analysis, his brooding dreams, his amusing self-conceit, bears in him the germs of a great artist much more certainly than any small monster of perfection. It is scarcely necessary to say that the autobiography here is not one of incident, as some persons have foolishly supposed; it is neither complete nor historically accurate. Tolstoi uses his material as an artist, but the material is himself. The artist craves to express the inward experiences of

his past life, of which he can scarcely speak. He invents certain imaginary events, or rearranges actual events as a frame into which he fits his own inward experiences. Whatever is most poignant and vivid in the novelist's art is so produced; and you say to him, "This is so real; you are narrating your own history." He will be able to reply laughingly, "Oh, no! my life is not at all like that." Imagination is a poor substitute for experience. There is sufficient external evidence extant, even if it were possible to doubt the internal, that Tolstoi is here throughout drawing on his own youthful experiences. Like Irteneff, young Tolstoi followed Franklin's injunctions as to the use of "Rules of Life"; his favorite books are the same; like him, also, he early developed a love of metaphysics, owing to which, young Irteneff says, "I lost one after the other the convictions which, for the happiness of my own life, I never should have dared to touch." All the slight indications in the "Confessions" of young Tolstoi's spiritual experiences agree with young Irteneff's. Even the plain face, "exactly like that of a common peasant," the small gray eyes and thick lips and wide nose, that caused the boy of the story to look at himself in the glass with such sorrow and aversion, to pray so fervently to God to be made handsome, correspond exactly to those of the real hero. No sign of the boy's early development is left untouched. We feel that this book, in which

the artist is first fully revealed, was the outcome of an overmastering impulse to give expression to the accumulated experiences of an intense and sensitive childhood, now receding for ever into the past.

Descended from a well-known minister and friend of Peter the Great, and belonging to a family that has been eminent for two hundred years in war, diplomacy, literature, and art, Lyof Tolstoi was born in 1828, the youngest of four sons; his mother, the Princess Marie Volkonsky, was the daughter of a general in Catherine's time, and, according to friends of the novelist's family, she resembled the Marie Bolkonsky of "War and Peace." Both parents were, he says, in the general esteem, "good cultivated, gentle, and devout." He was early left an orphan, his mother dying when he was not yet two years of age, his father when he was nine. At the age of fifteen he went to the University of Kazan; he left it suddenly to settle on the estate at Yasnaya Polyana which had fallen to him. In 1851, at the age of twenty-three, he became a junker (the usual position of a nobleman entering the army, doing the work of a common soldier and associating with the officers) in the artillery at the Caucasus; he was stationed on the Terek. This expedition to the Caucasus was a memorable event in young Tolstoi's life. It determined finally his artistic vocation. A center of military activity on

the most interesting frontier of the empire, it is a land of wonderful scenery and strange primitive customs, hallowed with association with Pushkin and Gogol. Tolstoi's elder and most loved brother Nikolai had just come home on leave from the Caucasus; it was natural that young Lyof, who had never yet left the neighborhood of Moscow, should be attracted to a land which held for him a fascination so manifold. Under the influence of this strange and new environment he became, almost at once, a great artist, and "Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth" was written in 1852.

Tolstoi's critics have sometimes regretted that he never continued this story. The only possible continuation of "Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth" is "The Cossacks." The young Irteneff of the end of the former book corresponds as closely as possible with the Olyenin who is analyzed at the beginning of the latter. A few years only have intervened. These years he long after summed up briefly and too sternly in the "Confessions": "I cannot think of those years without horror, disgust, and pain of heart. There was no vice or crime that in those days I would not have committed. Lying, theft, pleasure of all sorts, intemperance, violence, murder—I have committed all. I lived on my estate, I consumed in drink or at cards what the labor of the peasants had produced. I punished them, and

sold them, and deceived them; and for all that I was praised." Tolstoi condemns himself without mercy, as Bunyan condemned himself in his "Grace Abounding;" even in the "Confessions" he admits that at this time his aspirations after good were the central element in his nature, and it was out of desire to benefit his peasants that he left the university prematurely to settle on his estate.

Tolstoi's spiritual autobiography is carried on as accurately as any one need desire in "The Cossacks." It was in the Caucasus that he first powerfully realized what nature is, and natural life; he was, for the first time, forced to consider his own relation to such life. Lukashka, the healthy, coarse, young Cossack soldier, Maryana, the beautiful robust Cossack girl, and the delightful figure of Uncle Jeroshka, the old hunter, display their vivid and active life before Olyenin, the child of civilization. He lives constantly in the presence of the "eternal and inaccessible mountain snows and a majestic woman endowed with the primitive beauty of the first woman;" he feels the contrast between this and the life of cities: "happiness is to be with Nature, to see her, to hold converse with her;" and he longs to mingle himself with the life of Maryana. In vain. "Now if I could only become a Cossack like Lukashka, steal horses, get tipsy on red wine, shout ribald songs, shoot men down, and then while drunk creep in through the window

where she was, without a thought of what I was doing or why I did it, that would be another thing, then we should understand one another, then I might be happy. . . . She fails to understand me, not because she is beneath me, not at all; it would be out of the nature of things for her to understand me. She is lighthearted; she is like Nature, calm, tranquil, sufficient to herself. But I, an incomplete feeble creature, wish her to understand my ugliness and my anguish." The book is full of strongly-drawn pictures of the beauty of natural strength and health; sometimes recalling Whitman at his best. They are strange, these resemblances between three great typical artists of to-day, so far apart, so little known to each other, Millet, Whitman, and Tolstoi. In "The Cossacks" Tolstoi gives his first statement of that problem of man's natural function in life which he has been seeking to solve ever since. Here he has no sort of solution to offer; "some voice seemed to bid him wait, not decide hastily."

In 1854 Tolstoi was transferred at his own request to the Crimea, to obtain command of a mountain battery, doing good service at the battle of the Tchernaya. At this period also he wrote his "Sketches of Sebastopol." By this time he had attracted considerable attention as a writer, and by command of the Emperor, who said that "the life of that young man must be looked after," he was,



much to his own annoyance, removed to a place of comparative safety.

When peace was made, Tolstoi, then twenty-six years of age, left the army and settled in St. Petersburg, where he was warmly received by the chief literary circle of the capital, then including Turgenev, Gregorovitch, and Ostroffsky; the first, who was a comparatively near neighbor at Yasnaya Polyana, becoming one of his most intimate friends. During the following ten years he wrote little, but traveled in Germany, France, and Italy, and devoted himself to the education of the serfs on his estate, marrying in 1862 the young and beautiful daughter of a German military doctor at Tula. Although he wrote little, he was enlarging his conception of art and studying literature. He admired English novels, both for their art and naturalism, and among French novelists he preferred Dumas and Paul de Kock, whom he called the French Dickens. Schopenhauer was a favorite writer at this period. He found his chief recreations in that love of sport in all its forms which has left such vivid and delightful traces throughout his work. In his portraits he appears with a shaggy bearded face, with large prominent irregular features, and rather a stern fixed and reserved expression; the deep eyes are watchful yet sympathetic, and at the same time melancholy, and the thick lips are sensitive. His acquaintances described him as not easy

to approach, very shy and rather wild (*très-farouche et très-sauvage*), but those who approached him found him "extremely amiable." In his later "Confessions" he thus summarizes his view of things, and that of the group to which he belonged, during this literary period of his life, more especially with reference to the earlier part of it. "The view of life of my literary comrades lay in the opinion that in general life developed itself; that in this development we, the men of intellect, took the chief part, and among the men of intellect we, artists and poets, stood first. Our vocation was to instruct people. The very natural question, 'What do I know and what can I teach,' was unnecessary, for, according to the theory, one needed to know nothing. The artist, the poet, taught unconsciously. I held myself for a wonderful artist and poet, and very naturally appropriated this theory. I was paid for it, I had excellent food, a good habitation, women, society; I was famous. . . . When I look back to that time, to my state of mind then, and to that of the people I lived with (there are thousands of them, even now), it seems to me melancholy, horrible, ludicrous; I feel as one feels in a lunatic asylum. We were all then convinced that we must talk, talk, write and print as quickly as possible and as much as possible; because it was necessary for the good of humanity." This is by no means a satisfactory or final account of the matter.

"War and Peace," Tolstoi's longest and most ambitious work, which began to appear in 1865, is from the present point of view of comparatively slight interest. His art had now become more complex, and this was a serious attempt to give life to various aspects of a great historical period. Much of himself, certainly, we find scattered through the work, especially in Pierre Besoukhoff, though it is unnecessary to say that a very large part of Pierre's experiences had no counterpart in Tolstoi's; the not very life-like or interesting Masonic episode, for instance, has clearly been read up. Pierre, however, appears before us, from first to last, as Tolstoi appears before us, a seeker.

"Anna Karenina" is full of biographic material of intense interest. In Vronsky, doubtless much of his earlier experience, and in Levine, his own inner history at that time, are written clearly enough. From this standpoint the book has the vivid interest of a tragedy; we see the man whose efforts to solve the mystery of life we can trace through all that he ever wrote, still groping, but now more restlessly and eagerly, with growing desperation. The nets are drawn tight around him, and when we close the book we see clearly the inevitable fate of which he is still unconscious.

I once lived on the road to the cemetery of a large northern town. All day long, it seemed to me, the hearses were trundling along their

dead to the grave, or galloping gayly back. When I walked out I met men carrying coffins, and if I glanced at them, perhaps I caught the name of the child I saw two days ago in his mother's lap; or I was greeted by the burly widower of yesterday, pipe in mouth, sauntering along to arrange the burial of the wife who lay, I knew, upstairs at home, thin and haggard and dead. The road became fantastic and horrible at last; even such a straight road to the cemetery, it seemed, was the whole of life, a road full of the noise of the preparation of death. How daintily soever we danced along, each person, laughing so merrily or in such downright earnest, was merely a corpse, screwed down in an invisible coffin, trundled along as rapidly as might be to the grave-edge.—It was at such a point of view that Tolstoi arrived in his fiftieth year.

“When I had ended my book ‘Anna Karenina,’” he wrote in his “Confessions,” “my despair reached such a height that I could do nothing but think, think, of the horrible condition in which I found myself. . . . Questions never ceased multiplying and pressing for answers, and like lines converging all to one point, so these unanswerable questions pressed to one black spot. And with horror and a consciousness of my weakness, I remained standing before this spot. I was nearly fifty years old when these unanswerable questions brought me into this terrible and quite unexpected posi-

tion. I had come to this, that I—a healthy and happy man—felt that I could no longer live. . . . Bodily, I was able to work at mowing hay as well as a peasant. Mentally, I could work for eighteen hours at a time without feeling any ill consequence. And yet I had come to this, that I could no longer live. . . . I only saw one thing—Death. Everything else was a lie.”

The greater part of the “Confessions” is occupied with the analysis of this mental condition, and with the earlier stages of his deliverance, for when he wrote the book he was scarcely yet quite free. The direction in which light was to break in upon him is very clear even to the reader of “Anna Karenina.” It seemed to him at length that the awful questions which had oppressed him so long had been solved for thousands of years by millions upon millions of persons who had never reasoned about them at all. “From the time when men first began to live anywhere,” he says in the “Confessions,” “they already knew the meaning of life, and they carried on this life so that it reached me. Everything in me and around me, corporeal and incorporeal, is the fruit of their experiences of life; even the means by which I judge and condemn life, all this is not mine, but brought forth by them. I myself have been born, bred, grown up, thanks to them. They have dug out the iron, have tamed cattle and horses, have taught how

to till the ground, and how to live together and to order life; they have taught me to think and to reason. And I, their production, receiving my meat and drink from them, instructed by their thoughts and words, have proved to them they are an absurdity! . . . It is clear that I have only called absurd what I do not understand."

When he had made this great discovery the rest followed, slowly, but simply and naturally. First, he understood the meaning of God. He had all his life been seeking God. Now, one day in early spring, he was in the wood, trying to catch among the tones of the forest the cry of the snipe, listening and waiting, and thinking of the things he had been thinking of for the last three years, especially of this question of God. There was no God—that he knew was an intellectual truth. But is the knowledge of God an intellectual matter? And it seemed to him that he realized that God is life, and that to live is to know God. "And from that moment the consciousness of God, as known by living, has remained with me."

Following up this clew, he proceeded to attend church regularly, and to fulfill all the orthodox ceremonies. This, however, was a failure. He could not get rid of the consciousness that these things were—"bosh." He turned from the church to the Gospels. At this point the "Confessions" end. In the year

1879, in which he wrote that book, he heard of, and met, Soutaieff.

One evening a beggar woman had knocked at Soutaieff's door, asking shelter for the night. She was given food and a place of rest. Next morning all the family went to work in the field. The woman took the opportunity of collecting all the valuables she could lay her hands on, and fled. Some peasants at work saw her, stopped her, examined her bundle, and having bound her hands, led her before the local authorities. Soutaieff heard of this, and soon arrived. "Why have you arrested her?" he asked. "She is a thief; she must be punished," they cried. "Judge not, and you will not be judged," he said solemnly; "we are all guilty at some point. What is the good of condemning her? She will be put in prison, and what advantage will that be? It would be much better to give her something to eat, and to let her go in the grace of God." Such curiously Christ-like stories as this of the peasant-teacher reached Tolstoi, and made a deep impression on him. They were in the line of his mental development, and threw light on his own experiences. The influence of Soutaieff appears in "What then must we do?"—a further chapter in the history of Tolstoi's development, and perhaps the most memorable of his attempts at the solution of social questions.

What then must we do? It was the ques-

tion the people asked of John the Baptist, and we know his brief and practical answer. It was the question that pressed itself for solution on Tolstoi when he began to investigate the misery of Moscow, and to start philanthropic plans for its amelioration. He tells us in this narrative, which has a dramatic vividness of its own that will not bear abbreviation, how he was gradually forced, by his own well-meaning attempts and mistakes, to abandon his philanthropic projects, and to realize that he himself and all other respectable and well-to-do people were the direct causes of the misery of poverty.

He investigated the worst parts of the city, finding more comfort and happiness amidst rags than he had expected, and only discovering one hopelessly useless class—the class of those who had seen better days, who had been brought up in the notions that he himself had been brought up in as to the relative position of those who are workers and those who are not workers.

He met with a prostitute who stayed at home nursing the child of a dying woman. He asked her if she would not like to change her life—to become, he suggested at random, a cook. She laughed: "A cook? I cannot even bake bread;" but he detected in her face an expression of contempt for the occupation of a cook. "This woman, who, like the widow of the Gospel, had in the simplest way sacrificed



all that she possessed for a dying person, thought, like her companions, that work was low and contemptible. Therein was her misfortune. But who of us, man or woman, can save her from this false view of life? Where among us are the people who are convinced that a life of labor is more honorable than one of idleness, who live according to such a conviction, and value and respect men accordingly?" He came across another prostitute who had brought up her daughter of thirteen to the same trade. He determined to save the child, to put her in the hands of some compassionate ladies, but it was impossible to persuade the woman that she had not done the best for the daughter whom she had cared for all her life and brought up to the same occupation as herself; and he realized that it was the mother herself who had to be saved from a false view of life, according to which it was right to live without bearing children and without working, in the service of sensuality. "When I had considered this, I understood that the majority of ladies whom I would have called on to save this girl, not only themselves live without bearing children and without working, but also bring up their daughters to live such a life; the one mother sends her daughter to the public-house, the other to the ball. But both mothers possess the same view of life, namely, that a woman must be fed, clothed, and taken care of, to satisfy the wan-

tonness of a man. How, then, could our ladies improve this woman and her daughter?" He was anxious to befriend a bright boy of twelve, and took him into his own house among the servants, pending some better arrangement to give him work. At the end of a week this ungrateful little boy ran away, and was subsequently found at the circus, acting as conductor to an elephant, for thirty kopecks a day. "To make him happy and to improve him I had taken him into my house, where he saw—what? My children—older, younger, and the same age as himself—who not only did not work for themselves, but in every way gave work to others: they spoiled everything they came in contact with, over-ate themselves with sweets and delicacies, broke crockery, and threw to the dogs what to this boy would seem dainties. . . . I ought to have understood how foolish it was on my part—I who brought up my children in luxury to do nothing—to try to improve other people and their children, who lived in what I called 'dens,' but three-fourths of whom worked for themselves and for others." His experience was the same throughout, and he brings his usual keen insight to the analysis of his mental attitude when he gave money in charity, and to the mental attitude of the recipients of his charity. He found also that, even if his charity were to rival that of the poor, he would have to give 3,000 roubles to make a gift proportioned to the three kopecks

bestowed by a peasant, or to sacrifice his whole living for days at a time, like the prostitute who nursed the dying woman's child.

It seemed to him that he was like a man trying to draw another man out of a swamp, while he himself was standing on the same shifting and treacherous ground; every effort only served to show the character of the ground that he stood upon himself. When he was at the Night Shelter at Moscow, and looked at the wretched crowd who sought admission, he recalled his impression when he had seen a man guillotined at Paris thirty years previously, and with his whole being had understood that murder would always be murder, and that he had his share in the guilt. "So, at the sight of the hunger, cold, and degradation of thousands of men, I understood, not with my reason, but with my heart and my whole being, that the existence of ten thousand such men in Moscow, while I and other thousands eat daintily, clothe our horses and cover our floors—let the learned say as much as they will that it is inevitable—is a crime, committed not once but constantly, and that I with my luxury do not merely permit the crime, but take a direct part in it. The difference in the two impressions consisted only in this—that before the guillotine all I could have done would have been to cry out to the murderers that they were doing evil, and to try to prevent them. Even then I should have known beforehand that the deed

would not have been prevented. But here I could have given, not merely a warm drink or the little money that I had about me, but I could have given the coat from my body, and all that I had in my house. I did not do so, and therefore I felt, and still feel, and shall never cease to feel, that I am a partaker in that never-ceasing crime, so long as I have superfluous food and another has none, so long as I have two coats and another has none."

"My Religion," the best known of Tolstoi's social works, contains—not, indeed, the latest or the final statement, for Tolstoi is not a man to stand still—the clearest, most vigorous and complete statement of his beliefs. He here frankly admits that he has arrived by the road of his own experience at convictions similar to those of Jesus as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. That he has nothing to say in favor of the Christianity of to-day, which approves of society as it now is, with its prison cells, its factories, its houses of infamy, its parliaments, one need scarcely point out. He has nothing but contempt for "faith" which he regards as merely a kind of lunacy. "But reason, which illuminates our life and impels us to modify our actions, is not an illusion, and its authority can never be denied. . . . Jesus taught men to do nothing contrary to reason. It is unreasonable to go out to kill Turks or Germans; it is unreasonable to make use of the labors of others that you and yours may be

clothed in the height of fashion and maintain that source of *ennui*, a drawing-room; it is unreasonable to take people, already corrupted by idleness and depravity, and devote them to further idleness and depravity within prison walls: all this is unreasonable—and yet it is the life of the European world.” The doctrine of Jesus is hard, men say. But how much harder, exclaims Tolstoi, is the doctrine of the world! “In my own life,” he says, “(an exceptionally happy one, from a worldly point of view), I can reckon up as much suffering caused by following the doctrine of the world as many a martyr has endured for the doctrine of Jesus. All the most painful moments of my life—the orgies and duels in which I took part as a student, the wars in which I have participated, the diseases that I have endured, and the abnormal and unsupportable conditions under which I now live—all these are only so much martyrdom exacted by fidelity to the doctrine of the world.” And what of those less happily situated? “Thirty millions of men have perished in wars, fought in behalf of the doctrine of the world; thousands of millions of beings have perished, crushed by a social system organized on the principle of the doctrine of the world. . . . You will find, perhaps to your surprise, that nine-tenths of all human suffering endured by men is useless, and ought not to exist—that, in fact, the majority of men are martyrs to the doctrine of the world.”

Tolstoi sums up his own doctrine under a very few heads:—Resist not evil—Judge not—Be not angry—Love one woman. His creed is entirely covered by these four points. "My Religion" is chiefly occupied by the exposition of what they mean, and in his hands they mean much. They mean nothing less than the abolition of the State and the country. He is as uncompromising as Ibsen in dealing with the State. "It is a humbug, this State," he remarked to Mr. Stead. "What you call a Government is mere phantasmagoria. What is a State? Men I know; peasants and villages, these I see; but governments, nations, states, what are these but fine names invented to conceal the plundering of honest men by dishonest officials?" Law, tribunals, prisons, become impossible with the disappearance of the State; and with the disappearance of the country, and of "that gross imposture called patriotism," there can be no more war.

In place of these great and venerable pillars of civilization, what? The first condition of happiness, he tells us, is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken, that he may enjoy the sky above him, and the pure air and the life of the fields. This involves the nationalization of the land, or rather, to avoid centralizing tendencies, its communalization. "I quite agree with George," he remarked, "that the landlords may be fairly expropriated without compensation, as a mat-

ter of principle. But as a question of expediency, I think compensation might facilitate the necessary change. It will come, I suppose, as the emancipation of slaves came. The idea will spread. A sense of the shamefulness of private ownership will grow. Some one will write an 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' about it; there will be agitation, and then it will come, and many who own land will do as did those who owned serfs, voluntarily give it to their tenants. But for the rest, a loan might be arranged, so as to prevent the work being stopped by the cry of confiscation. Of course I do not hold with George about the taxation of the land. If you could get angels from Heaven to administer the taxes from the land, you might do justice and prevent mischief. I am against all taxation." The second condition of happiness is labor, the intellectual labor that one loves because one has chosen it freely, and the physical labor that is sweet because it produces the muscular joy of work, a good appetite, and tranquil sleep. The third condition of happiness is love. Every healthy man and woman should have sexual relationships; and Tolstoi makes no distinction between those that are called by the name of marriage and those that are not so called; in either case, however, he would demand that they shall be permanent. The fourth condition is unrestrained fellowship with men and women generally, without distinction of class. The fifth is health, though this seems

largely the result of obedience to the others. These are the five points of Tolstoi's charter. They seem simple enough, but he is careful to point out that most of them are closed to the rich. The rich man is hedged in by conventions, and cannot live a simple and natural life. A peasant can associate on equal terms with millions of his fellows; the circle of equal association becomes narrower and narrower the higher the social rank, until we come to kings and emperors, who have scarcely one person with whom they may live on equal terms. "Is not the whole system like a great prison, where each inmate is restricted to association with a few fellow-convicts?" The rich may, indeed, work, but even then their work usually consists in official and administrative duties, or the observance of arduous social conventions which are odious to them: "I say odious, for I never yet met with a person of this class who was contented with his work, or took as much satisfaction in it as the man who shovels the snow from his doorstep." From this standpoint Tolstoi has never since greatly varied.

Such as he is now he is known throughout the civilized world. He lives at his old home at Yasnaya Polyana, surrounded by less luxury than may be found in many a Siberian cottage, writing or shoemaking or plowing, or kneading clay in a tub to build incombustible cottages, or spending the day in spreading manure over the land of some poor widow. Such we see



him in his portraits, in the coarse blouse and the leather belt that he has always worn, with the massive, earnest, suffering, baffled face, as of a blind but unconquered Samson.

### III

With Tolstoi the artist we have here little concern. Yet from the first he has been an artist, and in spite of himself he is an artist to the last. We cannot pass by his art. One realizes this curiously in reading "What then must we do?" A profoundly sincere record without doubt of deeply-felt experiences and of a mental revolution, it is yet the work of an artist, a tragedy broadly and solemnly unfolding the misery of the world, the impotence of every scheme or impulse of charity, the light that comes only from freedom and self-development. Let us read, again, that little popular tract—"Does a man need much land?"—brimming over with meaning, about the man who gained permission to possess as much land as he could walk round from sunrise to sunset. Can he get so much into the circuit, not omitting this fine stretch of land, and this other? His constantly growing desires, his efforts, are told in brief, stern phrase, his feverish and failing strain to reach the goal, that at sunset is reached, and the man drops down dead. Then the curt and unaccentuated conclusion: "Pakhom's man took the hoe, dug a grave for

him, made it just long enough from head and foot—three arshins—and buried him." All the tragedy of the nineteenth century is pressed together into those half-dozen pages by the strong, relentless hand of the great artist who deigns to point no moral. From the early and delicious sketch of the frail musician, Albert, down to the somber and awful "Death of Ivan Ilyitch," Tolstoi has produced an immense body of work that must be considered, above all, as art. One reads this body of work with ever-growing delight and satisfaction. Gogol was a finer artist than Dickens, but there are too many suggestions about him of Dickens and the English novelists. Turgenev, a very great artist—how great, those little prose-poems, "Senilia," would alone suffice to show—an artist who thrilled to every touch, suffered from the excess of his sensitiveness, and perhaps also from an undue absorption in the western world. In Dostoievsky there is nothing of the west; he is intimately and intensely personal, with an even morbid research of all the fibers of organic misery in human nature. In all his work we seem to hear the groans of the prison-house, the house of the dead in Siberia. When we have read the wonderful book in which he has recorded the life of his years there, we know the source of all his inspiration. Reading all these authors, we are constantly aware of the neurotic element in Russian life and Russian character, the restless,

diseased element that is revealed to us in cold scientific analysis by Tarnowsky and S. P. Kowalevski and Dmitri Drill. It is not so when we turn to Tolstoi. In him we find not merely the insight and the realistic observation, but a breadth and sanity and wholeness that the others mostly fail to give us. His art is so full and broad and true that he seems able to do for his own time and country what Shakespeare with excess of poetic affluence did for his time, and Balzac for his. He is equal to every effort, he omits nothing that imports, he describes everything with the same calm ease and simplicity. It makes no difference whether, within the limits of a slight sketch, he is tracing delicately the life of the drunken artist, Albert, or producing the largest literary canvas of modern times, "War and Peace." In "Family Happiness" he analyzes passion, marriage, parenthood, the cycle of life, in a simple narration, a few chapters, yet nothing is omitted, and one shudders at the awful ease with which to this man these things seem to yield their secret. In "Ivan Ilyitch" he analyzes death and the house of death, quietly, completely, with a hand that never falters. He writes as a man who has touched life at many points, and tasted most that it has to offer, its joys and its sorrows, but he gazes upon it, even from the first, with the luminous and passionless calm of old age. His art is less perfect than Flaubert's, but Flaubert's intense personal

note, the ferocious nihilism of the Norman, is absent. He holds life up to the light, simply, and says: "This is what it is!"

For one who cannot read Tolstoi in the original, and who misses the style so much praised by those who are more privileged, Tolstoi seems an uncompromising realist. He has therefore often been compared with Zola, the prodigious representative and champion of Latin realism. In vain Zola himself disclaims this position; it is he more than any other who has influenced the novel, especially in the Latin countries, in the direction, if not of realism, at all events in that of anti-idealism; not Balzac or Stendhal, who have reached sure summits of fame, but have ceased to be living influences; not the De Goncourts, whose style cannot be imitated; least of all Flaubert, an idealist of idealists, whose profound art and marmoreal style are of the sort that it takes generations even to understand. It is interesting, doubtless, to put Tolstoi beside Zola, but the resemblance is not deep. Zola is the avowed prophet of a formula. He has read and pondered the "Introduction à l'étude de la Médecine Expérimentale," in which the great physiologist, Claude Bernard, expounded the principles of the experimental method as applied to the sciences of physical life. He has asked himself: "Can we not apply this same method to the psychological life? Can we not have an experimental novel?" "We seek the causes of

social evil," he declares in "*Le Roman Expérimental*," a collection of essays not less instructive than his novels, and more interesting; "we present the anatomy of classes and of individuals, in order to explain the aberrations which are produced in society and in man. This obliges us often to work on bad subjects, and to descend into the midst of human miseries and follies. But we bring the documents necessary to be known by those who would dominate good and evil. Here is what we have seen, observed, explained in all sincerity. Now it is the turn of the legislators!" To bring the scientific spirit of the age into the novel: it was a brilliant idea, and Zola forthwith set to work, with his immense energy and unshakeable resolution, to draw up a *procès-verbal* of human life—for this is the most that the "experimental method" comes to in the novel—which has not ceased to this day.

But, one asks oneself, what *is* reality? Zola has frankly explained how a novel ought to be written; how one must get one's human documents, study them thoroughly, accumulate notes, systematically frequent the society of the people one is studying, watch them, listen to them, minutely observe and record all their surroundings. But have we got reality then? Does the novelist I casually meet, and who has opportunities to take notes of my conversation and appearance, to examine the furniture of my house and to collect gossip about me, know

anything whatever of the romance or tragedy which to me is the reality of my life, these other things being but shreds or tatters of life? Or if my romance or tragedy has got into a law-court or a police-court, is he really much nearer then? The unrevealable motives, the charm, the mystery, were not deposed to by the policeman who was immediately summoned, nor by the servant-girl who looked through the key-hole. Certain disagreeable details: do they make up reality? To select the most beautiful and charming woman one knows, and to set a detective artist on her track, to follow her about everywhere, to keep an opera-glass fixed upon her, to catch fragments of her conversation, to enter her house, her bedroom, to examine her dirty linen,—would Helen of Troy emerge beautiful from this *procès-verbal*? And on which side would be most reality? Nature seems to resent this austere method of approaching her, and when we have closed our hands the reality has slipped through our fingers. A great artist, a Shakespeare or a Goethe, is not afraid of any fact, however repulsive it may seem, so long as it is significant. But it must be significant. Without sympathy and a severe criticism of details, the truly illuminating facts will be missed or lost in the heap. It is interesting to note that Zola himself recognizes this, and admits that he has been carried away by his delight and enthusiasm in attempting to vindicate for Art the

whole of Nature. Whatever is really fine in Zola's work—"La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret," or the last chapters of "Nana"—is fine because the man of a formula is for awhile subordinated to the artist.

Zola may work as hard as he will in the cause of the formula; he remains, above all, a man of massive temperament and peculiarly strong individuality. That is the real secret of his influence. A youth, developed in the poverty and hunger of a garret on the outskirts of Paris, who was fascinated by the great city he has lovingly painted, as it was there spread out before him, in "Une Page d'Amour," and condemned to see it only from the outside,—here was material for that irony, unending and absolutely pitiless, that runs through the whole of the vast Rougon-Macquart drama of the world. He is an austere moralist, with no tenderness for human weakness, "un tragique qui se fâche," as he calls himself, a Republican in spirit long before the Republic was proclaimed, a hater of all hypocrisies and empty prettinesses and fine phrases and elegant circumlocutions, a fighting man ready to fight to the last, with rude weapons but in fair combat. He represents the revolt against the French romantic movement—"une émeute de rhétoriciens," he calls it—which found its supreme incarnation in Victor Hugo. The Forty Immortals may have laughed serenely, but when Zola declared that he was carrying on the

classic tradition he was not altogether wrong. The classic tradition of France is marked by a very vivid sense of life; it has a close grip of the practical and material side of things, a wholesome contempt for all pretense, and sometimes a certain rather rank savor of audacity. Zola will scarcely stand beside Rabelais and Montaigne and Molière; the artist in him is too much crushed by ideas, and he has altogether run too much to seed; but he is fighting on the same side, and he has been proved to possess one quality which leaves little more to be said, effectiveness. Whatever the value of his work, he has turned the tide of novel literature, wherever his influence has spread, from frivolous inanities to the painstaking study of the facts of human life. Whatever we may think for the moment, that is a very wholesome and altogether moral revolution.

As for great art, that is neither here nor there. Shakespeare, Goethe, Flaubert,—for such men the extremes of poetry and of realism are equally welcome. Tolstoi, it is clear, is more of a realist than a poet, but his realism is of the kind that grows naturally out of the experiences of a man who has lived a peculiarly full and varied life. It is life *sur le vif*, not studied from a garret window. Nothing is omitted, nothing is superfluous; the narrative seems to lead the narrator rather than the narrator it, and through all we catch perpetu-



ally what seems an almost accidental fragrance of poetry. See the account of the storm in the "Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth," or of the child in the raspberry bush, or of the mowing, or the horse-race, in "Anna Karenina," with their peculiar, intangible yet vivid reality. But these things, it may be said, are poetry, the effluence of some divine moment of life, the record of some unforgettable thrill of blood and brain. Compare, then, the account of a childbirth in "Anna Karenina" (there is an earlier and less successful attempt in "War and Peace") with a similar scene which is the central episode in Zola's "La Joie de Vivre." The latter, doubtless, is instructive from its fidelity; every petty detail is coldly and minutely set forth. Its artistic value is difficult to estimate; it can scarcely be large. Zola presents the subject from the point of view of a disinterested and impossible spectator; in Tolstoi's scene we have frankly the husband's point of view. There is no room here for instructive demonstration of the mechanism of birth, of all its physical details and miseries. It is real life, but at such a moment real life is excitement, emotion, and the result is art. What, again, can be more unpromising than a novel about a remote historical war? But read "War and Peace" to see how lifelike, how vivid and fascinating, the narrative becomes in the hands of a man who has known the life of a soldier and all the chances of war.

Tolstoi is not alone among Russian novelists in the character of his realism. Gogol's "Dead Souls" has something of the wholesome naturalism as well as of the broad art and the good-natured satire of Fielding. He is perpetually insisting on the importance to the artist of those "little things which only seem little when narrated in a book, but which one finds very important in actual life." In his letters on "Dead Souls" Gogol wrote: "Those who have dissected my literary faculties have not discovered the essential feature of my nature. Pushkin alone perceived it. He always said that no author has been gifted like me to bring into relief the triviality of life, to describe all the platitude of a commonplace man, to make perceptible to all eyes the infinitely little things which escape our vision. That is my dominating faculty." Turgenev declared that the novel must cast aside all hypocrisy, sentimentality, and rhetoric for the simple yet nobler aim of becoming the history of life. Dostoievsky, that tender-hearted student of the perversities of the human heart, so faithful in his studies that he sometimes seems to forget how great an artist he is, justifies himself thus: "What is the good of prescribing to art the roads that it must follow? To do so is to doubt art, which develops normally, according to the laws of nature, and must be exclusively occupied in responding to human needs. Art has always shown itself faithful to

nature, and has marched with social progress. The ideal of beauty cannot perish in a healthy society; we must then give liberty to art, and leave her to herself. Have confidence in her; she will reach her end, and if she strays from the way she will soon reach it again; society itself will be the guide. No single artist, not Shakespeare himself, can prescribe to art her roads and aims." Tolstoi but followed in the same path when, in one of the earliest of his books, the "Sebastopol Sketches," he wrote: "The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the strength of my soul, whom I have tried to set forth in all his beauty, and who has always been, is, and always will be, most beautiful, is—Truth."

It is, after all, impossible to disentangle Tolstoi's art from the man himself and the ideas and aspirations that have stirred him. When we consider his history and development we are sometimes reminded of our own William Morris. They are both men of massive and sanguine temperament, of restless energy, groping their way through life with a vague sense of dissatisfaction; both pure artists through the greater part of their career, and both artists still, when late in life, and under the influence of rather sectarian ideas, they think that they have at length grasped the pillars of the heathen temple of society in which they have so long been groping, and are ready to wreak on it the pent-up unrest

of their lives. But they go to work in not quite the same way. Both, it is true, having apparently passed through a very slight religious phase in early life, have had this experience in later life, and in both it has taken on a social character; both, also, have sought their inspiration, not so much in a possible future deduced from the present, as in the past experiences of the race. Tolstoi with his semi-oriental quietism has returned to the rationalistic aspects of the social teaching of Jesus. Morris, who regards Iceland rather than Judæa as the Holy Land of the race, looks to Scandinavian antiquity for light on the problems of to-day. It is on the robust Scandinavian spirit of independence and comfortable well-to-do intolerance of all oppression and domination that Morris relies for the redemption of his own time and people. So far from identifying art, as Tolstoi is inclined to do, with the evil and luxury of the world, Morris finds in art a chief hope for the world. It is not, therefore, surprising that his art has suffered little from the fervor of his convictions, while his varied artistic activities have given him a wholesome grip on life. His new beliefs, on the other hand, have given new meaning to his art. His mastery of prose has only been acquired under the stress of his convictions. It is prose of massive simplicity, a morning freshness, unconscious and effortless. There is about it something of the peculiar charm of the finest

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Norman architecture. The "Dream of John Ball," a strong unpretentious piece of work, penetrated at every point by profound social convictions, yet with the artist's touch throughout, may be read with a delight which the complex and artificial prose we are accustomed to cannot give. England, it is said, is predominantly a Scandinavian country; Morris is significant because he gives expression in an extreme form to the racial instincts of his own people, just as Tolstoi expresses in equally extreme form the deepest instincts of his Slavonic race.

Against the "Dream of John Ball," we may place the work produced at the same time by the Russian's keener and more searching hand, "The Dominion of Darkness." This somber and awful tragedy is a terribly real and merciless picture of the worst elements in peasant life, a picture of avarice and lust and murder. Only one pious, stuttering, incoherent *mujik*, whose employment is to clean out closets, appears as the representative of mercy and justice. So thick is the gloom that it seems the artistic effect would have been heightened if the concluding introduction of the officers of an external and official justice had been omitted, and the curtain had fallen on the tragic merriement of the wedding feast. The same intense earnestness taking, almost unconsciously, an artistic shape, reveals itself in the little stories of which in recent years Tolstoi has produced

so many, some indeed comparatively ineffective, but others that are a fascinating combination of simplicity, realism, imaginative insight, brought to the service of social ideas. Such is "What men live by," the story of the angel who disobeyed God, and was sent to earth to learn that it is only in appearance that men are kept alive through care for themselves, but that in reality they are kept alive through love.

Tolstoi's voice is heard throughout the vast extent of Russia, not by the rich only, but by the peasant. That is why his significance is so great. Sometimes the religious censure prohibits his books; sometimes it allows them; in either case they are circulated. Published at a few halfpence, these little books are within the reach of the poorest, and Tolstoi gives free permission to any one to reproduce or translate any of his books. His drama, "The Dominion of Darkness, or when a bird lets himself be caught by one foot he is lost," was intended for the public who frequent the open-air theaters of fairs, and eighty thousand copies were sold during the first week, although certainly not altogether among the audience he would have preferred. The stories for children are circulated in scores of editions of twenty thousand copies each. Tolstoi has nothing to teach that he has not learnt from peasants, and which thousands of peasants might not have taught him. He has used his character and genius as a sounding-board to enable his voice to reach



millions of persons, many of whom, even the most intelligent, are not aware that he is but repeating the lessons he has learnt from unlettered *mujiks*

Now his voice has reached the countries of the West, and it sounds here far more unfamiliar than in a land so stirred by popular religious movements as Russia. "My Religion," that powerful argument *ad hominem* to the Christian from one who accepts both the letter and the spirit of Jesus's simplest and least questionable teaching, has had an especially large circulation in the West. Such a challenge has never before been scattered broadcast among the nations. What, one wonders, will be the outcome?

To most people the simplicity of the challenger is a cause of astonishment. After the assassination of Alexander II. and the sentence on the assassins, Tolstoi wrote to the present Tsar imploring him not to begin his reign with judicial murder, and he was deeply and genuinely disappointed at the inevitable reception of his appeal. Count Tolstoi, the author of "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," made the same mistake as the simple peasant Soutaieff. That little incident throws much light on his mental constitution. It is the attitude of a child, absorbed wholly in one thing at a time, unable to calculate the nature and the strength of opposing forces. It is the same fact of mental structure which leads the world-re-

nowned novelist to delight to learn from children, to be mortified when they do not like his stories, and to experience one of the greatest excitements of life when he thinks he detects the dawn of genius in a child of ten. The same characteristic appears in his treatment of science. He had heard, he told Mr. Kennan, that a Russian scientist had completely demolished the Darwinian theory. In "Life," one of his latest books, this tendency has carried him far away into a sterile and hopeless region of mystical phraseology. He dismisses scientific men briefly as the Scribes. It has not occurred to him apparently that this book, "Life," is a book of science. And, certainly, if science could produce nothing better than "Life," the language that Tolstoi uses regarding it were not one whit too strong. This child-like simplicity is not peculiar to Tolstoi; it is more or less the attitude of every true Russian, of the peasant who sets up the kingdom of Heaven, as of the Nihilist who thinks he can emancipate his country by destroying a few Tsars. It is a weakness that must often mean failure because it cannot estimate the strength of difficulties. At the same time it is a power. It is by this intense concentration on one desired object, this heroic inability to see opposition, that the highest achievement becomes possible.

Whatever Tolstoi's limitations and failures of perception, those things which he believes he has seen he grasps with inexorable tenacity.

The violence and misery of the world—that is a reality; a reality, he feels, which must be fought at all costs. Mr. Kennan tells how he pressed home on Tolstoi the cases of extreme brutality and oppression that he had known practiced on political prisoners in Siberia, and how, though Tolstoi's eyes filled with tears as he imagined the horrors described, he still pointed out in detail how, by opposing violence to violence in the cases cited, the misery of the world would be increased: "At the time when you interposed there was only one center of evil and suffering. By your violent interference you have created half-a-dozen such centers. It does not seem to me, Mr. Kennan, that this is the way to bring about the reign of peace and good-will on earth." <sup>1</sup>

Tolstoi possesses that social imagination which, though growing among us, is still so rare. If at the dinner where cheerful guests prolong their enjoyment, there were placed behind each chair a starved, ragged figure, with haggard and haunting face—would not the meal be broken up as speedily as if every guest had found the sword of Damocles hanging by a thread above his head? Yet it is only a lack of imagination which prevents us from seeing through the few layers of bricks that screen us off from these realities. For him who has seen it there is little rest, "so long as I have superflu-

<sup>1</sup> See the interesting paper, "A Visit to Count Tolstoi," in "Century," June, 1887.

ous food and another has none, so long as I have two coats and another has none."

With tears in his voice, and in words whose intense reality pierces through the translation, though this, we are told, cannot reproduce the graphic vividness of the original, Tolstoi speaks to us through his life and his work as he once spoke to the interviewer who came to him:

"People say to me, 'Well, Lef Nikolaivitch, as far as preaching goes, you preach; but how about your practice?' The question is a perfectly natural one; it is always put to me, and it always shuts my mouth. 'You preach,' it is said, 'but how do you live?' I can only reply that I do not preach—passionately as I desire to do so. I might preach through my actions, but my actions are bad. That which I say is not preaching; it is only my attempt to find out the meaning and the significance of life. People often say to me, 'If you think that there is no reasonable life outside the teachings of Christ, and if you love a reasonable life, why do you not fulfill the Christian precepts?' I am guilty and blameworthy and contemptible because I do not fulfill them; but at the same time I say, —not in justification, but in explanation, of my inconsistency,—Compare my previous life with the life I am now living, and you will see that I am trying to fulfill. I have not, it is true, fulfilled one eighty-thousandth part, and I am to blame for it; but it is not because I do not

wish to fulfill all, but because I am unable. Teach me how to extricate myself from the meshes of temptation in which I am entangled,—help me,—and I will fulfill all. I wish and hope to do it even without help. Condemn me if you choose,—I do that myself—but condemn *me*, and not the path which I am following, and which I point out to those who ask me where, in my opinion, the path is. If I know the road home, and if I go along it drunk, and staggering from side to side, does that prove that the road is not the right one? If it is not the right one, show me another. If I stagger and wander, come to my help, and support and guide me in the right path. Do not yourselves confuse and mislead me and then rejoice over it and cry, ‘Look at him! He says he is going home, and he is floundering into the swamp!’ You are not evil spirits from the swamp; you are also human beings, and you also are going home. You know that I am alone,—you know that I cannot wish or intend to go into the swamp,—then help me! My heart is breaking with despair because we have all lost the road; and while I struggle with all my strength to find it and keep in it, you, instead of pitying me when I go astray, cry triumphantly, ‘See! He is in the swamp with us!’ ”

## HUYSMANS

**I**N trying to represent the man who wrote the extraordinary books grouped around "A Rebours" and "En Route," I find myself carried back to the decline of the Latin world. I recall those restless Africans who were drawn into the vortex of decadent Rome, who absorbed its corruptions with all the barbaric fervor of their race, and then with a more natural impetus of that youthful fervor threw themselves into the young current of Christianity, yet retaining in their flesh the brand of an exotic culture. Tertullian, Augustine, and the rest gained much of their power, as well as their charm, because they incarnated a fantastic mingling of youth and age, of decayed Latinity, of tumultuously youthful Christianity. Huysmans, too, incarnates the old and the new, but with a curious, a very vital difference. To-day the rôles are reversed; it is another culture that is now young, with its aspirations after human perfection and social solidarity, while Christianity has exchanged the robust beauty of youth for the subtler beauty of age. "The most perfect analogy to our time which I can find," wrote Renan to his sister amid the

tumults of Paris in 1848, a few weeks after Huysmans had been born in the same city, "is the moment when Christianity and paganism stood face to face." Huysmans had wandered from ancestral haunts of medieval peace into the forefront of the struggles of our day, bringing the clear, refined perceptions of old culture to the intensest vision of the modern world yet attained, but never at rest, never once grasping except on the purely esthetic side the significance of the new age, always haunted by the memory of the past and perpetually feeling his way back to what seems to him the home of his soul.—The fervent seeker of those early days, indeed, but *à rebours!*

This is scarcely a mere impression; one might be tempted to say that it is strictly the formula of this complex and interesting personality. Coming on the maternal side from an ordinary Parisian bourgeois stock, though there chanced to be a sculptor even along this line, on the paternal side he belongs to an alien aristocracy of art. From father to son his ancestors were painters, of whom at least one, Cornelius Huysmans, still figures honorably in our public galleries, while the last of them left Breda to take up his domicile in Paris. Here his son, Joris Karl, has been the first of the race to use the pen instead of the brush, yet retaining precisely those characters of "veracity of imitation, jewel-like richness of color, perfection of finish, emphasis of character," which

their historian finds in the painters of his land from the fourteenth century onwards. Where the Meuse approaches the Rhine valley we find the home of the men who, almost alone in the north, created painting and the arts that are grouped around painting, and evolved religious music. On the side of art the Church had found its chief builders in the men of these valleys, and even on the spiritual side also, for here is the northern home of mysticism. Their latest child has fixed his attention on the feverish activities of Paris with the concentrated gaze of a stranger in a strange land, held by a fascination which is more than half repulsion, always missing something, he scarcely knows what. He has ever been seeking the satisfaction he had missed, sometimes in the esthetic vision of common things, sometimes in the refined Thebaid of his own visions, at length more joyfully in the survivals of medieval mysticism. Yet as those early Africans still retained their acquired Roman instincts, and that fantastic style which could not be shaken off, so Huysmans will surely retain to the last the tincture of Parisian modernity.

Yet we can by no means altogether account for Huysmans by race and environment. Every man of genius is a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, unlike other men, seeing everything as it were at a different angle, mirroring the world in his mind as in those concave or convex mirrors which elongate or abbreviate absurdly all



who approach them. No one ever had a keener sense of the distressing absurdity of human affairs than M. Huysmans. The Trocadero is not a beautiful building, but to no one else probably has it appeared as an old hag lying on her back and elevating her spindle shanks towards the sky. Such images of men's works and ways abound in Huysmans' books, and they express his unaffected vision of life, his disgust for men and things, a shuddering disgust, yet patient, half-amused. I can well recall an evening spent some years ago in M. Huysmans' company. His face, with the sensitive, luminous eyes, reminded one of Baudelaire's portraits, the face of a resigned and benevolent Mephistopheles who has discovered the absurdity of the Divine order but has no wish to make any improper use of his discovery. He talked in low and even tones, never eagerly, without any emphasis or gesture, not addressing any special person; human imbecility was the burden of nearly all that he said, while a faint twinkle of amused wonderment lit up his eyes. And throughout all his books until almost the last "*l'éternelle bêtise de l'humanité*" is the ever-recurring refrain.

Always leading a retired life, and specially abhorring the society and conversation of the average literary man, M. Huysmans has for many years been a government servant—a model official, it is said—at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Here, like our own officials

at Whitehall, he serves his country in dignified leisure—on the only occasion on which I have seen him in his large and pleasant *bureau*, he was gazing affectionately at Chéret's latest *affiche*, which a lady of his acquaintance had just brought to show him—and such duties of routine, with the close contact with practical affairs they involve, must always be beneficial in preserving the sane equipoise of an imaginative temperament. In this matter Huysmans has been more fortunate than his intimate friend Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, who had wandered so far into the world of dreams that he lost touch with the external world and ceased to distinguish them clearly. One is at first a little surprised to hear of the patient tact and diplomacy which the author of "A Rebours" spent round the deathbed of the author of "Contes Cruels" to obtain the dying dreamer's consent to a ceremony of marriage which would legitimate his child. But Huysman's sensitive nervous system and extravagant imagination have ever been under the control of a sane and forceful intellect; his very idealism has been nourished by the contemplation of a world which he has seen too vividly ever to ignore. We may read that in the reflective deliberation of his grave and courteous bearing, somewhat recalling, as more than one observer has noted, his own favorite animal, the cat, whose outward repose of Buddhistic contemplation envelops a highly-strung nervous system, while its capacity

to enjoy the refinements of human civilization comports a large measure of spiritual freedom and ferocity. Like many another man of letters, Huysmans suffers from neuralgia and dyspepsia; but no novelist has described so persistently and so poignantly the pangs of toothache or the miseries of *maux d'estomac*, a curious proof of the peculiarly personal character of Huysmans' work throughout. His sole pre-occupation has been with his own impressions. He possessed no native genius for the novel. But with a very sound instinct he set himself, almost at the outset of his career, to describe intimately and faithfully the crudest things of life, the things most remote from his own esoteric tastes but at that time counted peculiarly "real." There could be no better discipline for an idealist. Step by step he has left the region of vulgar actualities to attain his proper sphere, but the marvelous and slowly won power of expressing the spiritually impalpable in concrete imagery is the fruit of that laborious apprenticeship. He was influenced in his novels at first by Goncourt, afterwards a little by Zola, as he sought to reproduce his own vivid and personal vision of the world. This vision is like that of a man with an intense exaltation of the senses, especially the senses of sight and smell. Essentially Huysmans is less a novelist than a poet, with an instinct to use not verse but prose as his medium. Thus he early fell under the influence of Baudelaire's

prose-poems. His small and slight first volume, "Le Drageoir à Epices," bears witness to this influence, while yet revealing a personality clearly distinct from Baudelaire's. This personality is already wholly revealed in the quaint audacity of the little prose-poem entitled "L'Extase." Here, at the very outset of Huysmans' career, we catch an unconscious echo of medieval asceticism, the voice, it might be, of Odo of Cluny, who nearly a thousand years before had shrunk with horror from embracing a "sack of dung"; "quomodo ipsum stercoris saccum amplecti desideramus!" "L'Extase" describes how the lover lies in the wood clasping the hand of the beloved and bathed in a rapture of blissful emotion; "suddenly she rose, disengaged her hand, disappeared in the bushes, and I heard as it were the rustling of rain on the leaves"; at once the delicious dream fled and the lover awakes to the reality of commonplace human things. That is a parable of the high-strung idealism, having only contempt for whatever breaks in on its ideal, which has ever been the mark of Huysmans. His sensitive ear is alive to the gentlest ripple of nature, and it jars on him; it becomes the deafening Niagara of "the incessant deluge of human foolishness"; all his art is the research for a Heaven where the voice of Nature shall no more be heard. Baudelaire was also such a hyperæsthetic idealist, but the human tenderness which vibrates beneath the surface of Baudelaire's work has

been the last quality to make itself more than casually felt in Huysmans. It is the defect which vitiated his early work in the novel, when he was still oscillating between the prose-poem and the novel, clearly conscious that while the first suited him best only in the second could mastery be won. His early novels are sometimes portentously dull, with a lack of interest, or even attempt to interest, which itself almost makes them interesting, as frank ugliness is. They are realistic with a veracious and courageously abject realism, never, like Zola's, carefully calculated for its pictorial effectiveness, but dealing simply with the trivialest and sordidest human miseries. His first novel "Marthe"—which inaugurated the long series of novels devoted to state-regulated prostitution in those slaughter-houses of love, as Huysmans later described them, where Desire is slain at a single stroke,—sufficiently repulsive on the whole, is not without flashes of insight which reveal the future artist, and to some readers indeed make it more interesting than "La Fille Elisa," which the Goncourts published shortly afterwards. Unlike the crude and awkward "Marthe"—though that book reveals the influence of the Goncourts—"La Fille Elisa" shows the hand of an accomplished artist, but it is also the work of a philanthropist writing with an avowed object, and of a fine gentleman ostentatiously anxious not to touch pitch with more than a finger-tip. The Preface to "Marthe"

contains a declaration which remains true for the whole of Huysmans' work: "I set down what I see, what I feel, what I have lived, writing it as well as I am able, *et voilà tout!*" But it has ever been a dangerous task to set down what one sees and feels and has lived; for no obvious reason, except the subject, "Marthe," was immediately suppressed by the police. This first novel remains the least personal of Huysmans' books; in his next novel, "Les Sœurs Vatarde"—a study of Parisian workgirls and their lovers—a more characteristic vision of the world begins to be revealed, and from that time forward there is a continuous though irregular development both in intellectual grip and artistic mastery. "Sac au Dos," which appeared in the *Soirées de Medan*, represents a notable stage in this development, for here, as he has since acknowledged, Huysmans' hero is himself. It is the story of a young student who serves during the great war in the Garde Mobile of the Seine, and is invalided with dysentery before reaching the front. There is no story, no striking impression to record—nothing to compare with Guy de Maupassant's incomparably more brilliant "Boule-de-Suif," also dealing with the fringe of war, which appears in the same volume—no opportunity for literary display, nothing but a record of individual feelings with which the writer seems satisfied because they are interesting to himself. It is, in fact, the germ of that method which

Huysmans has since carried to so brilliant a climax in "En Route." All the glamour of war and the enthusiasm of patriotism are here—long before Zola wrote his "Débâcle"—reduced to their simplest terms in the miseries of the individual soldier whose chief aspiration it becomes at last to return to a home where the necessities of nature may be satisfied in comfort and peace. At that time Huysmans' lack of patriotic enthusiasm seemed almost scandalous; but when we bear in mind his racial affinities it is natural that he should, as he once remarked to an interviewer, "prefer a Leipzig man to a Marseilles man," "the big, phlegmatic, taciturn Germans" to the gesticulating and rhetorical people of the French south. In "Là-Bas," at a later date, through the mouth of one of his characters, Huysmans goes so far as to regret the intervention of Joan of Arc in French history, for had it not been for Joan France and England would have been restored to their racial and prehistoric unity, consolidated into one great kingdom under Norman Plantagenets, instead of being given up to the southerners of Latin race who surrounded Charles VII.

The best of Huysmans' early novels is undoubtedly "En Ménage." It is the intimate history of a young literary man who, having married a wife whom he shortly afterwards finds unfaithful, leaves her, returns to his bachelor life, and in the end becomes recon-

ciled to her. This picture of a studious man who goes away with his books to fight over again the petty battles of bachelorhood with the *bonne* and the *concierge* and his own cravings for womanly love and companionship, reveals clearly for the first time Huysmans' power of analyzing states of mind that are at once simple and subtle. Perhaps no writer surprises us more by his revealing insight into the commonplace experiences which all a novelist's traditions lead him to idealize or ignore. As a whole, however, "En Ménage" is scarcely yet a master's work, a little labored, with labor which cannot yet achieve splendor of effect. Nor can a much slighter story, "A Vau l'Eau," which appeared a little later, be said to mark a further stage in development, though it is a characteristic study, this sordid history of Folantin, the poor, lame, discontented, middle-aged clerk. Cheated and bullied on every side, falling a prey to the vulgar woman of the street who boisterously takes possession of him in the climax of the story, all the time feeling poignantly the whole absurdity of the situation, there is yet one spot where hope seems possible. He has no religious faith; "and yet," he reflects, "yet mysticism alone could heal the wound that tortures me." Thus Folantin, though like André in "En Ménage" he resigns himself to the inevitable stupidity of life, yet stretches out his hands towards the Durtal of Huysmans' latest work.



In all these novels we feel that Huysmans has not attained to full self-expression. Intellectual mastery, indeed, he is attaining, but scarcely yet the expression of his own personal ideals. The poet in Huysmans, the painter enamored of beauty and seeking it in unfamiliar places, has little scope in these detailed pictures of sordid or commonplace life. At this early period it is still in prose-poems, especially in "Croquis Parisiens," that this craving finds satisfaction. Des Esseintes, the hero of "A Rebours," who on so many matters is Huysmans' mouthpiece, of all forms of literature preferred the prose-poem when, in the hands of an alchemist of genius, it reveals a novel concentrated into a few pages or a few lines, the concrete juice, the essential oil of art. It was "a communion of thought between a magical writer and an ideal reader, a spiritual collaboration among a dozen superior persons scattered throughout the world, a delectation offered to the finest wits, and to them alone accessible." Huysmans took up this form where Baudelaire and Mallarmé had left it, and sought to carry it yet further. In that he was scarcely successful. The excess of tension in the tortured language with which he elaborates his effects too often holds him back from the goal of perfection. We must yet value in "Croquis Parisiens" its highly wrought and individual effects of rhythm and color and form. In France, at all events, Huysmans is held to

inaugurate the poetic treatment of modern things—a characteristic already traceable in “*Les Sœurs Vatar*”—and this book deals with the æsthetic aspects of latter-day Paris, with the things that are “ugly and superb, outrageous and yet exquisite,” as a type of which he selects the Folies-Bergère, at that time the most characteristic of Parisian music-halls, and he was thus the first to discuss the æsthetic value of the variety stage which has been made cheaper since. For the most part, however, these *Croquis* are of the simplest and most commonplace things—the forlorn Bièvre district, the poor man’s *café*, the roast-chestnut seller—extracting the beauty or pathos or strangeness of all these things. “Thy garment is the palette of setting suns, the rust of old copper, the brown gilt of Cordovan leather, the sandal and saffron tints of the autumn foliage. . . . When I contemplate thy coat of mail I think of Rembrandt’s pictures, I see again his superb heads, his sunny flesh, his gleaming jewels on black velvet. I see again his rays of light in the night, his trailing gold in the shade, the dawning of suns through dark arches.” The humble bloater has surely never before been sung in language which recalls the Beloved of the “Song of Songs.” Huysmans has carried to an even extravagant degree that re-valuation of the world’s good in which genius has ever found its chief function. To abase the mighty and exalt the humble seems

to man the divinest of prerogatives, for it is that which he himself exercises in his moments of finest inspiration. To find a new vision of the world, a new path to truth, is the instinct of the artist or the thinker. He changes the whole system of our organized perceptions. That is why he seems to us at first an incarnate paradox, a scoffer at our most sacred verities, making mountains of our mole-hills and counting as mere mole-hills our everlasting mountains, always keeping time to a music that clashes with ours, at our hilarity *tristis*, in *tristitia hilaris*.

In 1889 "A Rebours" appeared. Not perhaps his greatest achievement, it must ever remain the central work in which he has most powerfully concentrated his whole vision of life. It sums up the progress he had already made, foretells the progress he was afterwards to make, in a style that is always individual, always masterly in its individuality. Technically, it may be said that the power of "A Rebours" lies in the fact that here for the first time Huysmans has succeeded in uniting the two lines of his literary development: the austere analysis in the novels of commonplace things mostly alien to the writer, and the freer elaboration in the prose-poems of his own more intimate personal impressions. In their union the two streams attain a new power and a more intimately personal note. *Des Esseintes*, the hero of this book, may possibly

have been at a few points suggested by a much less interesting real personage in contemporary Paris, the Comte de Montesquiou-Fezensac, but in the main he was certainly created by Huysmans' own brain, as the representative of his author's hyperæsthetic experience of the world and the mouthpiece of his most personal judgments. The victim of over-wrought nerves, of neuralgia and dyspepsia, Des Esseintes retires for a season from Paris to the solitude of his country house at Fontenay, which he has fitted up, on almost cloistral methods, to soothe his fantasy and to gratify his complex æsthetic sensations, his love of reading and contemplation. The finest pictures of Gustave Moreau hang on the walls, with the fantastic engravings of Luyken, and the strange visions of Odilon Redon. He has a tortoise curiously inlaid with precious stones; he delights in all those exotic plants which reveal Nature's most unnatural freaks; he is a sensitive amateur of perfumes, and considers that the pleasures of smell are equal to those of sight or sound; he possesses a row of little barrels of liqueurs so arranged that he can blend in infinite variety the contents of this instrument, his "mouth-organ" he calls it, and produce harmonies which seem to him comparable to those yielded by a musical orchestra. But the solitary pleasures of this palace of art only increase the nervous strain he is suffering from; and at the urgent bidding of his doctor

Des Esseintes returns to the society of his abhorred fellow-beings in Paris, himself opening the dyke that admitted the "waves of human mediocrity" to engulf his refuge. And this wonderful confession of æsthetic faith—with its long series of deliberately searching and decisive affirmations on life, religion, literature, art—ends with a sudden solemn invocation that is surprisingly tremulous: "Take pity, O Lord, on the Christian who doubts, on the skeptic who desires to believe, on the convict of life who embarks alone, in the night, beneath a sky no longer lit by the consoling beacons of ancient faith."

"He who carries his own most intimate emotions to their highest point becomes the first in file of a long series of men;" that saying is peculiarly true of Huysmans. But to be a leader of men one must turn one's back on men. Huysmans' attitude towards his readers was somewhat like that of Thoreau, who spoke with lofty disdain of such writers as "would fain have one reader before they die." As he has since remarked, Huysmans wrote "A Rebours" for a dozen persons, and was himself more surprised than any one at the wide interest it evoked. Yet that interest was no accident. Certain æsthetic ideals of the latter half of the nineteenth century are more quintessentially expressed in "A Rebours" than in any other book. Intensely personal, audaciously independent, it yet sums up a move-

ment which has scarcely now worked itself out. We may read it and re-read, not only for the light which it casts on that movement, but upon every similar period of acute æsthetic perception in the past.

## II

The æsthetic attitude towards art which "A Rebours" illuminates is that commonly called decadent. Decadence in art, though a fairly simple phenomenon, and world-wide as art itself, is still so ill understood that it may be worth while to discuss briefly its precise nature, more especially as manifested in literature.

Technically, a decadent style is only such in relation to a classic style. It is simply a further development of a classic style, a further specialization, the homogeneous, in Spencerian phraseology, having become heterogeneous. The first is beautiful because the parts are subordinated to the whole; the second is beautiful because the whole is subordinated to the parts. Among our own early prose-writers Sir Thomas Browne represents the type of decadence in style. Swift's prose is classic, Pater's decadent. Hume and Gibbon are classic, Emerson and Carlyle decadent. In architecture which is the key to all the arts, we see the distinction between the classic and the decadent visibly demonstrated; Roman architecture is classic, to become in its Byzantine

developments completely decadent, and St. Mark's is the perfected type of decadence in art; pure early Gothic, again, is strictly classic in the highest degree because it shows an absolute subordination of detail to the bold harmonies of structure, while later Gothic, grown weary of the commonplaces of structure and predominantly interested in beauty of detail, is again decadent. In each case the earlier and classic manner—for the classic manner, being more closely related to the ends of utility, must always be earlier—subordinates the parts to the whole, and strives after those virtues which the whole may best express; the later manner depreciates the importance of the whole for the benefit of its parts, and strives after the virtues of individualism. All art is the rising and falling of the slopes of a rhythmic curve between these two classic and decadent extremes.

Decadence suggests to us going down, falling, decay. If we walk down a real hill we do not feel that we commit a more wicked act than when we walked up it. But if it is a figurative hill then we view Hell at the bottom. The word "corruption"—used in a precise and technical sense to indicate the breaking up of the whole for the benefit of its parts—serves also to indicate a period or manner of decadence in art. This makes confusion worse, for here the moralist feels that surely he is on safe ground. But as Nietzsche, with

his usual acuteness in cutting at the root of vulgar prejudice, has well remarked (in "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft"), even as regards what is called the period of "corruption" in the evolution of societies, we are apt to overlook the fact that the energy which in more primitive times marked the operations of the community as a whole has now simply been transferred to the individuals themselves, and this aggrandizement of the individual really produces an even greater amount of energy. The individual has gained more than the community has lost. An age of social decadence is not only the age of sinners and degenerates, but of saints and martyrs, and decadent Rome produced an Antoninus as well as a Heliogabalus. No doubt social "corruption" and literary "corruption" tend to go together; an age of individualism is usually an age of artistic decadence, and we may note that the chief literary artists of America—Poe, Hawthorne, Whitman—are for the most part in the technical sense decadents.

Rome supplies the first clear types of classic and decadent literature, and the small group of recent French writers to whom the term has been more specifically applied were for the most part peculiarly attracted by later Latin literature. So far as I can make out, it is to the profound and penetrating genius of Baudelaire that we owe the first clear apprehension of the legitimate part which decadence plays



in literature. We may trace it, indeed, in his own style, clear, pure, and correct as that style always remains, as well as in his literary preferences. He was a good Latinist, and his favorite Latin authors were Apuleius, Juvenal, Petronius, Saint Augustine, Tertullian, and other writers in prose and verse of the early Christian Church. He himself wrote a love-poem in rhymed Latin verse, adding to it a note concerning the late Latin decadence regarded as "the supreme sigh of a vigorous person already transformed and prepared for the spiritual life," and specially apt to express passion as the modern world feels it, one pole of the magnet at the opposite end of which are Catullus and his band. "In this marvelous tongue," he added, "solecism and barbarism seem to me to render the forced negligences of a passion which forgets itself and mocks at rules. Words taken in a new meaning reveal the charming awkwardness of the northern barbarian kneeling before the Roman beauty." But the best early statement of the meaning of decadence in style—though doubtless inspired by Baudelaire—was furnished by Gautier in 1868 in the course of the essay on Baudelaire which is probably the most interesting piece of criticism he ever achieved. The passage is long, but so precise and accurate that it must here in part be quoted: "The poet of the 'Fleurs du Mal' loved what is improperly called the style of decadence, and which is nothing

else but art arrived at that point of extreme maturity yielded by the slanting suns of aged civilizations: an ingenious complicated style, full of shades and of research, constantly pushing back the boundaries of speech, borrowing from all the technical vocabularies, taking color from all palettes and notes from all keyboards, struggling to render what is most inexpressible in thought, what is vague and most elusive in the outlines of form, listening to translate the subtle confidences of neurosis, the dying confessions of passion grown depraved, and the strange hallucinations of the obsession which is turning to madness. The style of decadence is the ultimate utterance of the Word, summoned to final expression and driven to its last hiding-place. One may recall in this connection the language of the later Roman Empire, already marbled with the greenness of decomposition, and, so to speak, gamy, and the complicated refinements of the Byzantine school, the last forms of Greek art falling into deliquescence. Such indeed is the necessary and inevitable idiom of peoples and civilizations in which factitious life has replaced natural life, and developed unknown wants in men. It is, besides, no easy thing, this style disdained of pedants, for it expresses new ideas in new forms, and in words which have not yet been heard. Unlike the classic style it admits shadow. . . . One may well imagine that the fourteen hundred words of

the Racinian vocabulary scarcely suffice the author who has undertaken the laborious task of rendering modern ideas and things in their infinite complexity and multiple coloration."

Some fifteen years later, Bourget, again in an essay on Baudelaire ("Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine"), continued the exposition of the theory of decadence, elaborating the analogy to the social organism which enters the state of decadence as soon as the individual life of the parts is no longer subordinated to the whole. "A similar law governs the development and decadence of that other organism which we call language. A style of decadence is one in which the unity of the book is decomposed to give place to the independence of the page, in which the page is decomposed to give place to the independence of the phrase, and the phrase to give place to the independence of the word." It was at this time (about 1884) that the term "decadent" seems first to have been applied by Barrès and others to the group of which Verlaine, Huysmans, Mallarmé were the most distinguished members, and in so far as it signified an ardent and elaborate search for perfection of detail beyond that attained by Parnassian classicality it was tolerated or accepted. Verlaine, indeed, was for the most part indifferent to labels, neither accepting nor rejecting them, and his work was not bound up with any theory. But Huysmans, with the intellectual passion of the pioneer in

art, deliberate and relentless, has carried both the theory and the practice of decadence in style to the farthest point. In practice he goes beyond Baudelaire, who, however enamored he may have been of what he called the phosphorescence of putrescence, always retained in his own style much of what is best in the classic manner. Huysmans' vocabulary is vast, his images, whether remote or familiar, always daring,—“dragged,” in the words of one critic, “by the hair or by the feet, down the worm-eaten staircase of terrified Syntax,”—but a heart-felt pulse of emotion is restrained beneath the somber and extravagant magnificence of this style, and imparts at the best that modulated surge of life which only the great masters can control.

Des Esseintes's predilections in literature are elaborated through several chapters, and without question he faithfully reflects his creator's impressions. He was indifferent or contemptuous towards the writers of the Latin Augustan age; Virgil seemed to him thin and mechanical, Horace a detestable clown; the fat redundancy of Cicero, we are told, and the dry constipation of Cæsar alike disgusted him; Sallust, Livy, Juvenal, even Tacitus and Plautus, though for these he had words of praise, seemed to him for the most part merely the delights of pseudo-literary readers. Latin only began to be interesting to Des Esseintes in Lucan, for here at least, in spite of the un-

derlying hollowness, it became expressive and studded with brilliant jewels. The author whom above all he delighted in was Petronius—who reminded Des Esseintes of the modern French novelists he most admired—and several eloquent pages are devoted to that profound observer, delicate analyst, and marvelous painter who modeled his own vivid and precise style out of all the idioms and slang of his day. After Petronius there was a gap in his collection of Latin authors until the second century of our own era is reached with Apuleius and the sterner Christian contemporaries of that jovial pagan, Tertullian and the rest, in whose hands the tongue that in Petronius had reached supreme maturity now began to dissolve. For Tertullian he had little admiration, and none for Augustine, though sympathizing with his "City of God" and his general disgust for the world. But the special odor which the Christians had by the fourth century imparted to decomposing pagan Latin was delightful to him in such authors as Commodian of Gaza, whose tawny, somber, and tortuous style he even preferred to Claudian's sonorous blasts, in which the trumpet of paganism was last heard in the world. He was also able to maintain interest in Prudentius, Sedulius, and a host of unknown Christians who combined Catholic fervor with a Latinity which had become, as it were, completely putrid, leaving but a few shreds of torn flesh

for the Christians to "marinate in the brine of their new tongue." His shelves continued to show Latin books of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, among which he found special pleasure in the Anglo-Saxon writers, and only finally ceased at the beginning of the tenth century, when "the curiosity, the complicated *naïveté*" of the earlier tongue were finally lost in scholastic philosophy and mere cartularies and chronicles.<sup>1</sup> Then, with a formidable leap of ten centuries, his Latin books gave place to nineteenth century French books.

Des Esseintes is no admirer of Rabelais or Molière, of Voltaire or Rousseau. Among the older French writers he read only Villon, D'Aubigné, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Nicole, and especially Pascal. Putting these aside, his French library began with Baudelaire, whose works he had printed in an edition of one copy, in episcopal letters, in large missal *format*, bound in flesh-colored pig-skin; he found an unspeakable delight in reading this poet who, "in an age when verse only served to express the external aspects of things, had succeeded in expressing the inexpressible, by virtue of a muscular and sinewy speech which more than

<sup>1</sup> It may be gathered from the Preface he wrote at a later date for M. Remy de Gourmont's delightful volume, "Le Latin Mystique," that Huysmans would no longer draw a line at this point; for he here speaks with enthusiasm of the styles of St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas d'Aquinas.

any other possessed the marvelous power of fixing with strange sanity of expression the most morbid, fleeting, tremulous states of weary brains and sorrowful souls." After Baudelaire the few French books on Des Esseintes's shelves fall into two groups, one religious, one secular. Most of the French clerical writers he disregarded, for they yield a pale flux of words which seemed to him to come from a school-girl in a convent. Lacordaire he regarded as an exception, for his language had been fused and molded by ardent eloquence, but for the most part the Catholic writers he preferred were outside the Church. For Hello's "Homme," especially, he cherished profound admiration, and an inevitable sympathy for its author, who seemed to him "a cunning engineer of the soul, a skillful watchmaker of the brain, delighting to examine the mechanism of a passion and to explain the play of the wheel-work," and yet united to this power of analysis all the fanaticism of a Biblical prophet, and the tortured ingenuity of a master of style—an ill-balanced, incoherent, yet subtle personality. But above all he delighted in Barbey d'Aurevilly, shut out from the Church as an unclean and pestiferous heretic, yet glorying to sing her praises, insinuating into that praise a note of almost sadistic sacrilege, a writer at once devout and impious, altogether after Des Esseintes's own heart, so that a special copy

of the "Diaboliques," in episcopal violet and cardinal purple, printed on sanctified vellum with initials adorned by satanic tails, formed one of his most cherished possessions. In D'Aurevilly's style alone he truly recognized the same gaminess, the speckled morbidity, the flavor as of a sleepy pear which he loved in decadent Latin and the monastic writers of old time. Of contemporary secular books he possessed not many; by force of passing them through the screw-press of his brain few were finally found solid enough to emerge intact and bear re-reading, and in this process he had accelerated "the incurable conflict which existed between his ideas and those of the world into which by chance he had been born." Certain selected works of the three great French novelists of his time—Flaubert, Goncourt, and Zola—still remained, for in all three he found in various forms, that "nostalgie des au-delà" by which he was himself haunted; and with Baudelaire, these three were, in modern profane literature, the authors by whom he had chiefly been molded. The scanty collection also included Verlaine, Mallarmé, Poe, and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, whose firm fantastic style and poignantly ironic attitude towards the utilitarian modern world he found entirely to his taste. Finally, there only remained the little anthology of prose-poems. Des Esseintes thought it improbable that he would ever make any additions to his library; it seemed im-



possible to him that a decadent language—"struggling on its death-bed to repair all the omissions of joy and bequeath the subtlest memories of pain"—would ever go beyond Mallarmé. This brief summary of the three chapters, all full of keen if wayward critical insight, which describe Des Esseintes's library, may serve at once both to indicate the chief molding influences on Huysmans' own style and to illustrate the precise nature of decadence in art and the fundamental part it plays.

We have to recognize that decadence is an æsthetic and not a moral conception. The power of words is great, but they need not befool us. The classic herring should suggest no moral superiority over the decadent bloater. We are not called upon to air our moral indignation over the bass end of the musical clef. All confusion of intellectual substances is foolish, and one may well sympathize with that fervid unknown metaphysician to whom we owe the Athanasian creed when he went so far as to assert that it is damnable. It is not least so in the weak-headed decadent who falls into the moralist's snare and complacently admits his own exceeding wickedness. We may well reserve our finest admiration for the classic in art, for therein are included the largest and most imposing works of human skill; but our admiration is of little worth if it is founded on incapacity to appreciate the decadent. Each has its virtues, each is equally

right and necessary. One ignorant of plants might well say, on gazing at a seed-capsule with its seeds disposed in harmonious rows, that there was the eternally natural and wholesome order of things, and on seeing the same capsule wither and cast abroad its seeds to germinate at random in the earth, that here was an unwholesome and deplorable period of decay. But he would know little of the transmutations of life. And we have to recognize that those persons who bring the same crude notions into the field of art know as little of the life of the spirit.

### III

For some years after the appearance of "A Rebours" Huysmans produced nothing of any magnitude. "En Rade," his next novel, the experience of a Parisian married couple who, under the stress of temporary pecuniary difficulties, go into the country to stay at an uncle's farm, dwells in the memory chiefly by virtue of two vividly naturalistic episodes, the birth of a calf and the death of a cat. More interesting, more intimately personal, are the two volumes of art criticism, "L'Art Moderne" and "Certains," which Huysmans published at about this period. Degas, Rops, Raffaelli, Odilon Redon are among the artists of very various temperament whom Huysmans either discovered, or at all events first appreciated in

their full significance, and when he writes of them it is not alone critical insight which he reveals, but his own personal vision of the world.

To Huysmans the world has ever been above all a vision; it was no accident that the art that appeals most purely to the eyes is that of which he has been the finest critic. One is tempted, indeed, to suggest that this aptitude is the outcome of heredity, of long generations devoted to laborious watchfulness of the desire of the eye in the external world, not indeed by actual accumulation of acquired qualities, but by the passing on of a nervous organism long found so apt for this task. He has ever been intensely preoccupied with the effort to express those visible aspects of things which the arts of design were made to express, which the art of speech can perhaps never express. The tortured elaboration of his style is chiefly due to this perpetual effort to squeeze tones and colors out of this foreign medium. The painter's brain holds only a pen and cannot rest until it has wrung from it a brush's work. But not only is the sense of vision marked in Huysmans. We are conscious of a general hyperæsthesia, an intense alertness to the inrush of sensations, which we might well term morbid if it were not so completely intellectualized and controlled. Hearing, indeed, appears to be less acutely sensitive than sight, the poet is subordinated to the

painter, though that sense still makes itself felt, and the heavy multicolored paragraphs often fall at the close into a melancholy and poignant rhythm laden with sighs. It is the sense of smell which Huysmans' work would lead us to regard as most highly developed after that of sight. The serious way in which *Des Essences* treats perfumes is characteristic, and one of the most curious and elaborate of the "Croquis Parisiens" is "Le Gousset," in which the capacities of language are strained to define and differentiate the odors of feminine arm-pits. Again, earlier, in a preface written for Hannon's "Rimes de Joie," Huysmans points out that that writer—who failed to fulfill his early promise—alone of contemporary poets possessed "la curiosité des parfums," and that his chief poem was written in honor of what Huysmans called "the libertine virtues of that glorious perfume," opoponax. This sensitiveness to odor is less marked in Huysmans' later work, but the dominance of vision remains.

The two volumes of essays on art incidentally serve to throw considerable light on Huysmans' conception of life. For special illustration we may take his attitude towards women, whom in his novels he usually treats, from a rather conventionally sexual point of view, as a fact in man's life rather than as a subject for independent analysis. In these essays we may trace the development of his

own personal point of view, and in comparing the earlier with the later volume we find a change which is significant of the general evolution of Huysmans' attitude towards life. He is at once the ultra-modern child of a refined civilization and the victim of nôtalgia for an ascetic medievalism; his originality lies in the fact that in him these two tendencies are not opposed but harmonious, although the second has only of late reached full development. In a notable passage in "En Rade," Jacques, the hero, confesses that he can see nothing really great or beautiful in a harvest field, with its anodyne toil, as compared with a workshop or a steamboat, "the horrible magnificence of machines, that one beauty which the modern world has been able to create." It is so that Huysmans views women also; he is as indifferent to the feminine ideals of classic art as to its literary ideals. In *L'Art Moderne*, speaking with admiration of a study of the nude by Gauguin, he proceeds to lament that no one has painted the unclothed modern woman without falsification or premeditated arrangement, real, alive in her own intimate personality, with her own joys and pains incarnated in the curves of her flesh, and the lash of child-birth traceable on her flanks. We go to the Louvre to learn how to paint, he remarks, forgetting that "beauty is not uniform and invariable, but changes with the age and the climate, that the Venus of Milo, for

instance, is now not more beautiful and interesting than those ancient statues of the New World, streaked and tattooed and adorned with feathers; that both are but diverse manifestations of the same ideal of beauty pursued by different races; that at the present date there can be no question of reaching the beautiful by Venetian, Greek, Dutch, or Flemish rites; but only by striving to disengage it from contemporary life, from the world that surrounds us." "Un nu fatigué, délicat, affiné, vibrant" can alone conform to our own time; and he adds that no one has truly painted the nude since Rembrandt. It is instructive to turn from this essay to that on Degas, written some six years later. It may fairly be said that to Degas belongs the honor of taking up the study of the nude at the point where Rembrandt left it; and like Rembrandt, he has realized that the nude can only be rightly represented in those movements, postures, and avocations by which it is naturally and habitually exposed. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that Huysmans at once grasped the full significance of the painter's achievement. But he has nothing now to say of the beauty that lies beneath the confinement of modern garments, "the delicious charm of youth, grown languid, rendered as it were divine by the debilitating air of cities." On the contrary, he emphasizes the vision which Degas presents of women at the bath-tub revealing in every

"frog-like and simian attitude" their pitiful homeliness, "the humid horror of a body which no washing can purify." Such a glorified contempt of the flesh, he adds, has never been achieved since the Middle Ages. There we catch what had now become the dominant tone in Huysmans' vision; the most modern things in art now suggest to him, they seem to merge into, the most medieval and ascetic. And if we turn to the essay on Félicien Rops in the same volume—the most masterly of his essays—we find the same point developed to the utmost. Rops in his own way is as modern and as daring an artist of the nude as Degas. But, as Huysmans perceives, in delineating the essentially modern he is scarcely a supreme artist, is even inferior to Forain, who in his own circumscribed region is insurpassable. Rops, as Huysmans points out, is the great artist of the symbolical rather than the naturalistic modern, a great artist who furnishes the counterpart to Memlinc and Fra Angelico. All art, Huysmans proceeds, "must gravitate, like humanity which has given birth to it and the earth which carries it, between the two poles of Purity and Wantonness, the Heaven and the Hell of art." Rops has taken the latter pole, in no vulgar nymphomaniacal shapes, but "to divulge its causes, to summarize it Catholically, if one may say so, in ardent and sorrowful images"; he has drawn women who are "diabolical Theresas, satan-

ized saints." Following in the path initiated by Baudelaire and Barbey D'Aurevilly, Huysmans concludes, Rops has restored Wantonness to her ancient and Catholic dignity. Thus is Huysmans almost imperceptibly led back to the old standpoint from which woman and the Devil are one.

"Certains" was immediately followed by "Là-bas." This novel is mainly a study of Satanism, in which Huysmans interested himself long before it attracted the general attention it has since received in France. There are, however, three lines of interest in the book, the story of Gilles de Rais and his Sadism, the discussion of Satanism culminating in an extraordinary description of a modern celebration of the Black Mass, and the narration of Durtal's *liaison* with Madame Chantelouve, wherein Huysmans reaches, by firm precision and triumphant audacity, the highest point he has attained in the analysis of the secrets of passion. But though full of excellent matter, the book loses in impressiveness from the multiplicity of these insufficiently compacted elements of interest.

While not among his finest achievements, however, it serves to mark the definite attainment of a new stage in both the spirit and the method of his work. Hitherto he had been a realist, in method if not in spirit, and had conquered the finest secrets of naturalistic art; by the help of "En Ménage" alone, as Hennequin, one of his earliest and best critics has



said, "it will always be possible to restore the exact physiognomy of Paris to-day." At the outset of "Là-bas" there is a discussion concerning the naturalistic novel and its functions which makes plain the standpoint to which Huysmans had now attained. Pondering the matter, Durtal, the hero of the book, considers that we need, on the one hand, the veracity of document, the precision of detail, the nervous strength of language, which realism has supplied; but also, on the other hand, we must draw water from the wells of the soul. We cannot explain everything by sexuality and insanity; we need the soul and the body in their natural reactions, their conflict and their union. "We must, in short, follow the great high-way so deeply dug out by Zola, but it is also necessary to trace a parallel path in the air, another road by which we may reach the Beyond and the Afterward, to achieve thus, in one word, a spiritualistic naturalism." Dostoievsky comes nearest to this achievement, he remarks, and the real psychologist of the century is not Stendhal but Hello. In another form of art the early painters—Italian, German, especially Flemish—realized this ideal. Durtal sees a consummate revelation of such spiritual naturalism in Matthæus Grünewald's crucifixion at Cassel—the Christ who was at once a putrid and unaureoled corpse and yet a manifest god bathed in invisible light, the union of outrageous realism and outrageous

idealism. "Thus from triumphal ordure Grünewald extracted the finest mints of dilection, the sharpest essences of tears." One may say that the tendency Huysmans here so clearly asserts had ever been present in his work. But in his previous novels his own native impulse was always a little unduly oppressed by the naturalistic formulas of Goncourt and Zola. The methods of these great masters had laid a burden on his work, and although the work developed beneath, and because of, that burden, a sense of laborious pain and obscurity too often resulted. Henceforth this disappears. Huysmans retains his own complexity of style, but he has won a certain measure of simplicity and lucidity. It was a natural development, no doubt furthered also by the position which Huysmans had now won in the world of letters. "A Rebours," which he had written for his own pleasure, had found an echo in thousands of readers, and the consciousness of an audience inspired a certain clarity of speech. From this time we miss the insults directed at the *bêtise* of humanity. These characteristics clearly mark Huysmans' next and perhaps greatest book, in which the writer who had conquered all the secrets of decadent art now sets his face towards the ideals of classic art.

In "En Route," indeed, these new qualities of simplicity, lucidity, humanity, and intensity of interest attain so high a degree that the book

has reached a vast number of readers who could not realize the marvelous liberation from slavery to its material which the slow elaboration of art has here reached. In "A Rebours" Huysmans succeeded in taking up the prose-poem into his novel form, while at the same time certainly sacrificing something of the fine analysis of familiar things which he had developed in "En Ménage." In "En Route" he takes the novel from the point he had reached in "A Rebours," incorporates into it that power of analysis which has now reached incomparable simplicity and acuity, and thus wields the whole of the artistic means which he has acquired during a quarter of a century to one end, the presentation of a spiritual state which has become of absorbing personal interest to himself.

I well remember hearing M. Huysmans, many years ago, tell how a muddle-headed person had wished to commission him to paint a head of Christ. It seemed then a deliciously absurd request to make of the author of "A Rebours," and his face wore the patient smile which the spectacle of human stupidity was wont to evoke, but I have since thought that that muddle-headed person was wiser than he knew. As we look back on Huysmans' earlier work it is now easy to see how he has steadily progressed towards his present standpoint. "En Route" does not represent, as some might imagine, the reaction of an exhausted de-

bauchee or even the self-deception of a disappointed man of the world. The temperament of Durtal is that of André and Folantin and Des Esseintes; from the first, in the "Drageoir à Epices," Huysmans has been an idealist and a seeker, by no means an ascetic, rather a man whose inquisitive senses and restless imagination had led him to taste of every forbidden fruit, but never one to whom the vulgar pleasures of life could offer any abiding satisfaction. The more precise record of Des Esseintes's early sexual life may help us here; while for the penultimate stage Durtal's relations with Madame Chantelouve in "Là-bas," and the mingled attraction and repulsion which he felt for her, are certainly significant. In "En Route" Durtal magnifies his own wickedness, as Bunyan did in his "Grace Abounding;" the saints have always striven to magnify their wickedness, leaving to the sinners the congenial function of playing at righteousness. To trace the real permanence of Huysmans' attitude towards religion it is enough to turn back to "A Rebours." Des Esseintes had been educated by the Jesuits, and it sometimes seemed to him that that education had put into him some extra-terrestrial ferment which never after ceased to work, driving him in search of a new world and impossible ideals. He could find no earthly place of rest; he sought to build for himself a "refined Thebaid" as a warm and comfortable ark wherein to find

shelter from the flood of human imbecility. He was already drawn towards the Church by many bonds, by his predilection for early Christian Latinity, by the exquisite beauty of the ecclesiastical art of the Middle Ages, by his love for monastic medieval music, "that emaciated music which acted instinctively on his nerves" and seemed to him precious beyond all other. Just as Nietzsche was always haunted by the desire for a monastery for free-thinkers, so Des Esseintes dreamed of a hermitage, of the advantages of the cloistered life of convents, wherein men are persecuted by the world for meting out to it the just contempt of silence.

Des Esseintes, and even the Durtal of "Là-bas," always put aside these thoughts with the reflection that, after all, the Church is only an out-worn legend, a magnificent imposture. In "En Route" Durtal has taken a decisive step. He has undergone that psychological experience commonly called "conversion." It is only of recent years that the phenomena of conversion have been seriously studied, but we know at all events that it is not intellectual, not even necessarily moral transformation, though it may react in either direction, but primarily an emotional phenomenon; and that it occurs especially in those who have undergone long and torturing disquietude, coming at last as the spontaneous resolution of all their doubts, the eruption of a soothing flood of peace, the

silent explosion of inner light. The insight with which this state is described in "En Route" seems to testify to a real knowledge of it. No obvious moral or intellectual change is effected in Durtal, but he receives a new experience of reposeful faith, a conviction deeper than all argument. It is really the sudden emergence into consciousness of a very gradual process, and the concrete artistic temperament which had been subjected to the process reacts in its own way. A more abstract intelligence would have asked: "But, after all, is my faith true?" Durtal, in the presence of the growing structure of sensory and imaginative forms within him, which has become as it were a home, feels that the question of its truth has fallen into the background. Its perfect fitness has become the affirmation of its truth. Henceforth it is the task of his life to learn how best to adapt himself to what he recognizes as his eternal home. "En Route" represents a stage in this adaptation.

By a rare chance—a happier chance than befell Tolstoi under somewhat similar circumstances—a new development in artistic achievement has here run parallel, and in exquisite harmony, with the new spiritual development. The growing simplicity of Huysmans' work has reached a point beyond which it could not perhaps be carried without injury to his vivid and concrete style. And the new simplicity of spirit, of which it is the reflection, marks

the final retreat into the background of that unreasonable contempt for humanity which ran through nearly all the previous books, and now at last passes even into an ecstasy of adoration in the passages concerning old Simon, the monastery swine-herd. Huysmans has chiefly shown his art, however, by relying almost solely for the interest of his book on his now consummate power of analysis. This power, which we may perhaps first clearly trace in "Sac au Dos," has developed in "En Ménage" into a wonderful skill to light up the unexplored corners of the soul and to lay bare those terrible thoughts which are, as he has somewhere said, the lamentable incarnation of "the unconscious ignominy of pure souls." In his earlier masterpiece, "A Rebours," however, it is little seen, having mostly passed into æsthetic criticism. The finest episode of emotional analysis here is the admirable chapter in which Des Esseintes's attempt to visit London is narrated. All his life he had wished to see two countries, Holland and England. (And here we may recall that the former is Huysmans' own ancestral land, and that his French critics find in his work a distinct flavor of English humor.) He had actually been to Holland, and with visions won from the pictures of Rembrandt, Steen, and Teniers he had returned disillusioned. Now he went to Galignani's, bought an English Baedeker, entered the bodega in the Rue de Rivoli to

drink of that port which the English love, and then proceeded to a tavern opposite the Gare St. Lazare to eat what he imagined to be a characteristic English meal, surrounded by English people, and haunted by memories of Dickens. And as time went by he continued to sit still, while all the sensations of England seemed to pass along his nerves, still sat until at last the London mail had started. "Why stir," he asked himself, "when one can travel so magnificently in a chair? . . . Besides, what can one expect save fresh disillusionment, as in Holland? . . . And then I have experienced and seen what I wanted to experience and see. I have saturated myself with English life; it would be madness to lose by an awkward change of place these imperishable sensations. . . . He called a cab and returned with his portmanteaus, parcels, valises, rugs, umbrellas, and sticks to Fontenay, feeling the physical and mental fatigue of a man who returns home after a long and perilous journey." There could be no happier picture of the imaginative life of the artistic temperament. But in "En Route" analysis is the prime element of interest; from first to last there is nothing to hold us but this searching and poignant analysis of the fluctuations of Durtal's soul through the small section which he here travels in the road towards spiritual peace. And on the way, lightly, as by chance, the author drops the finest appreciations of liturgical æsthetics, of



plain-chant, of the way of the Church with the soul, of the everlasting struggle with the Evil One. There could, for instance, be no better statement than this of one of the mystic's secrets: "There are two ways of ridding ourselves of a thing which burdens us, casting it away or letting it fall. To cast away requires an effort of which we may not be capable, to let fall imposes no labor, is simpler, without peril, within reach of all. To cast away, again, implies a certain interest, a certain animation, even a certain fear; to let fall is absolute indifference, absolute contempt; believe me, use this method, and Satan will flee." How many forms of Satan there are in the world before which we may profitably meditate on these words! To strive or cry in the face of human stupidity is not the way to set it to flight; that is the lesson which Des Esseintes would never listen to, which Durtal has at last learnt.<sup>1</sup>

"En Route" is the first of a trilogy, and the names of the succeeding volumes, "La Cathédrale" and "L'Oblat," sufficiently indicate the end of the path on which Durtal, if not indeed

<sup>1</sup> In the seventeenth century a great English man of science, Stephen Hales, had discovered the same truth, for we are told that "he could look even upon wicked men, and those who did him unkind offices, without any emotion of particular indignation, not from want of discernment or sensibility; but he used to consider them only like those experiments which, upon trial, he found could never be applied to any useful purpose, and which he therefore calmly and dispassionately laid aside."

his creator, has started. But however that may prove, whatever Huysmans' own final stage may be, there can be little doubt that he is the greatest master of style, and within his own limits the subtlest thinker and the acutest psychologist who in France to-day uses the medium of the novel. Only Zola can be compared with him, and between them there can be no kind of rivalry. Zola, with his immense and exuberant temperament, his sanity and width of view, his robust and plebeian art, has his own place on the high-road of modern literature. Huysmans, an intellectual and æsthetic aristocrat, has followed with unflinching sincerity the by-path along which his own more high-strung and exceptional temperament has led him, and his place, if seemingly a smaller one, is at least as sure; wherever men occupy themselves with the literature of the late nineteenth century they will certainly sometimes talk about Zola, sometimes read Huysmans. Zola's cyclopean architecture can only be seen as a whole when we have completed the weary task of investigating it in detail; in Huysmans we seek the expressiveness of the page, the sentence, the word. Strange as it may seem to some, it is the so-called realist who has given us the more idealized rendering of life; the concentrated vision of the idealist in his own smaller sphere has revealed not alone mysteries of the soul, but even the exterior secrets of life. True it is that Huysmans has passed by with

serene indifference, or else with contempt, the things which through the ages we have slowly learnt to count beautiful. But on the other hand, he has helped to enlarge the sphere of our delight by a new vision of beauty where before to our eyes there was no beauty, exercising the proper function of the artist who ever chooses the base and despised things of the world, even the things that are not, to put to nought the things that are. Therein the decadent has his justification. And while we may accept the pioneer's new vision of beauty, we are not called upon to reject those old familiar visions for which he has no eyes, only because his gaze must be fixed upon that unfamiliar height towards which he is leading the men who come after.

#### IV

Huysmans very exquisitely represents one aspect of the complex modern soul, that aspect which shrinks from the grosser forces of Nature, from the bare simplicity of the naked sky or the naked body, the "incessant deluge of human foolishness," the eternal oppression of the commonplace, to find a sedative for its exasperated nerves in the contemplation of esoteric beauty and the difficult search for the mystic peace which passes all understanding. "Needs must I rejoice beyond the age," runs the motto from the old Flemish mystic Ruys-

broeck set on the front of "A Rebours," "though the world has horror of my joy and its grossness cannot understand what I would say." Such is decadence; such, indeed, is religion, in the wide and true sense of the word. Christianity itself, as we know it in the western church, sprang from the baptism of young barbarism into Latin decadence. Pagan art and its clear serenity, science, rationalism, the bright, rough vigor of the sun and the sea, the adorable mystery of common life and commonplace human love, are left to make up the spirit that in any age we call "classic."

Thus what we call classic corresponds on the spiritual side to the love of natural things, and what we call decadent to the research for the things which seem to lie beyond Nature. "*Corporea pulchritudo in pelle solummodo constat. Nam si viderent homines hoc quod subtus pellem est, sicut lynces in Beotia cernere interiore dicuntur, mulieres videre nausearent. Iste decor in flegmate et sanguine et humore ac felle constitit.*" That is St. Odo of Cluny's acute analysis of woman, who for man is ever the symbol of Nature: beauty is skin-deep, drowned in excretions which we should scarcely care to touch with the finger's tip. And for the classic vision of Nature, listen to that fantastic and gigantic Englishman, Sir Kenelm Digby, whose "Memoirs," whose whole personality, embodied the final efflorescence of the pagan English Renaissance. He has been ad-

mitted by her maids to the bed-chamber of Venetia Stanley, the famous beauty who afterwards became his wife; she is still sleeping, and he cannot resist the temptation to undress and lie gently and reverently beside her, as half disturbed in her slumber she rolled on to her side from beneath the clothes; "and her smock was so twisted about her fair body that all her legs and the best part of her thighs were naked, which lay so one over the other that they made a deep shadow where the never-satisfied eyes wished for the greatest light. A natural ruddiness did shine through the skin, as the sunbeams do through crystal or water, and ascertained him that it was flesh that he gazed upon, which yet he durst not touch for fear of melting it, so like snow it looked. Her belly was covered with her smock, which it raised up with a gentle swelling, and expressed the perfect figure of it through the folds of that discourteous veil. Her paps were like two globes—wherein the glories of the heaven and the earth were designed, and the azure veins seemed to divide constellations and kingdoms—between both which began the milky way which leadeth lovers to their Paradise, somewhat shadowed by the yielding downwards of the uppermost of them as she lay upon her side, and out of that darkness did glisten a few drops of sweat like diamond sparks, and a more fragrant odor than the violets or primroses, whose season was nearly

passed, to give way to the warmer sun and the longest days." They play with the same counters, you observe, these two, Odo and Digby, with skin, sweat, and so forth, each placing upon them his own values. Idealists both of them, the one idealizes along the line of death, the other along the line of life which the whole race has followed, and both on their own grounds are irrefutable, the logic of life and the logic of death, alike solidly founded in the very structure of the world, of which man is the measuring-rod.

The classic party of Nature seems, indeed, the stronger—in seeming only, and one recalls that, of the two witnesses just cited, the abbot of Cluny was the most venerated man of his age, while no one troubled even to publish Digby's "Memoirs" until our own century—but it carries weakness in its very strength, the weakness of a great political party formed by coalition. It has not alone idealists on its side, but for the most part also the blind forces of robust vulgarity. So that the more fine-strung spirits are sometimes driven to a reaction against Nature and rationalism, like that of which Huysmans, from "L'Extase" onwards, has been the consistent representative. At the present moment such a reaction has attained a certain ascendancy.

Christianity once fitted nearly every person born into the European world; there must needs be some to whom, in no modern devital-

ized form but in its purest essence, it is still the one refuge possible. No doubt conditions have changed; the very world itself is not what it was to the medieval man. One has to recognize that the modern European differs in this from his medieval ancestor that now we know how largely the world is of our own making. The sense of interiority, as the psychologists say, is of much later development than the sense of exteriority. For the medieval man,—as still to-day for the child in the darkness,—his dreams and his fancies every organic thrill in eye or ear, seemed to be flashed on him from a world of angels and demons without. In a sense which is scarcely true to-day the average man of those days—not the finer or the coarser natures, it may well be—might be said to be the victim of a species of madness, a paranoia, a systematized persecutorial delusion. He could not look serenely in the face of the stars or lie at rest among the fir-cones in the wood, for who knew what ambush of the Enemy might not lurk behind these things? Even in flowers, as St Cyprian said, the Enemy lay hidden.

“Nil jocundum, nil amœnum,  
Nil salubre, nil serenum,  
Nihil dulce, nihil plenum.”

There was only one spot where men might huddle together in safety—the church. There the blessed sound of the bells, the contact of

holy water, the smell of incense, the sight of the Divine Flesh, wove a spiritual coat of mail over every sensory avenue to the soul. The winds of hell might rave, the birds of night dash themselves against the leaden spires of that fortress whence alone the sky seemed blue with hope.

Huysmans, notwithstanding a very high degree of intellectual subtlety, is by virtue of his special æsthetic and imaginative temperament carried back to the more childlike attitude of this earlier age. The whole universe appears to him as a process of living images he cannot reason in abstractions, cannot *rationalize*; that indeed is why he is inevitably an artist. Thus he is a born leader in a certain modern emotional movement.

That movement, as we know, is one of a group of movements now peculiarly active. We see them on every hand, occultism, theosophy, spiritualism, all those vague forms on the borderland of the unknown which call to tired men weary of too much living, or never strong enough to live at all, to hide their faces from the sun of nature and grope into cool, delicious darkness, soothing the fever of life. It is foolish to resent this tendency; it has its rightness; it suits some, who may well cling to their private dream if life itself is but a dream. At the worst we may remember that, however repugnant such movements may be, to let fall remains a better way of putting Satan to flight.



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than to cast away. And at the best one should know that this is part of the vital process by which the spiritual world moves on its axis, alternating between darkness and light.

Therefore soak yourself in mysticism, follow every intoxicating path to every impossible Beyond, be drunken with medievalism, occultism, spiritualism, theosophy, and even, if you will, protestantism—the cup that cheers, possibly, but surely not inebriates—for the satisfaction that comes of all these is good while it lasts. Yet be sure that Nature is your home, and that from the farthest excursions you will return the more certainly to those fundamental instincts which are rooted in the zoölogical series at the summit of which we stand. For the whole spiritual cosmogony finally rests, not indeed on a tortoise, but on the emotional impulses of the mammal vertebrata which constitute us men.

Meanwhile we will not grieve because in the course of our pilgrimage on earth the sun sets. It has always risen again. We may lighten the darkness of the journey by admiring the beauty of night, plucking back the cowl if needs must we wear it.—*Eia, fratres, pergamus.*

## CONCLUSION

**T**OLSTOI brings us face to face with religion. If we think of it, every personality we have considered has brought us subtly in contact with that ineluctable shape. It is strange: men seek to be, or to seem, atheists, agnostics, cynics, pessimists; at the core of all these things lurks religion. We may find it in Diderot's mighty enthusiasm, in Heine's passionate cries, in Ibsen's gigantic faith in the future, in Whitman's not less gigantic faith in the present. We see the same in the music-dramas of Wagner, in Zola's pathetic belief in a formula, in Morris's worship of an ideal past, in the aspirations of every Socialist who looks for the return of those barbarous times in which all men equally were fed and clothed and housed. The men who have most finely felt the pulse of the world, and have, in their turn, most effectively stirred its pulse, are religious men.

One is forced to ask oneself at last: How can I make clear to myself this vast and many-shaped religious element of life? It will not let me pass it by. Can I—without any attempt to theorize or to explain—reduce it to some common denominator, so that I may at

least gain the satisfaction that comes of the clear and harmonious presentation of a complex fact? When we have settled the question of the evolution of religion, another more fundamental question may still be asked: What is the nature of the impulse that underlies, and manifests itself in, that sun-worship, nature-worship, fetich-worship, ghost-worship, to which, with occasional appeal to the vast reservoir of sexual and filial love, we may succeed in reducing religious phenomena? On the one hand, this impulse must begin to develop at least as early as the earliest appearance of worship; on the other hand, we cannot ascertain its distinctive characters unless we also examine and compare its more specialized forms. What is there in common between the religious attitude of the child of to-day, enfranchized from creeds, and that of, let us say, Lâo-tsze, the child of a day that is twenty-five centuries old; or between these and the far more primitive adoration of the Dravidian for his cattle? If the vague term "religion," which, as commonly used, contains at least three elements—moral, scientific, emotional—covers any distinct and persistent human impulse, what is the nature and scope of that impulse? I wish to represent to myself, as precisely and as broadly as may be, man's religious relation.

When we look out into the universe we see a vast medium, the world, gradually merging

itself indistinctly in a practical infinite, and in the center a certain limited number of souls, souls like the theoretical atoms of the physicist, never under any circumstances touching. Let two souls approach ever so nearly, there is yet a subtle chasm, through which

“The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea”

still flows. These souls are made up essentially of mind and body. There can be no change of consciousness without a corresponding change in the vascular circulation. There can be no thrill of body in a soul without a correlated thrill of mind. Matter and mind in the soul are co-extensive. When we speak of the “spirit” as ruling the body, or as yielding to it, we are, it must be remembered, using a traditional method of speech which had its origin in a more primitive theory, just as we still speak of sun-rise. In the soul the spiritual can no more be subordinated to the material, strictly speaking, than in water the oxygen can be subordinated to the hydrogen. The old dispute for supremacy between mind and matter no longer has any significance. Both matter and mind are in the end equally unknown: *exeunt in mysterium*.

The soul is born and then dies. What do we mean by *birth* and *death*? According to the old Hebrew conception a spirit was created out of nothing and put into a mold of matter, and then at death again passed back into

nothing. But to-day this conception is impossible. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. It is clear that both the elements that make up the soul must be, under some form, equally eternal. By a marvelous cosmic incident, our little planet has broken forth into a strange and beautiful efflorescence. We rise from the world, whom we are, on this variegated jet of organic life, to fall back again to our true life, by whatever unknown ways and under whatever change of form, conscious, it may be, but, as before birth, no longer with any self to be conscious of, no longer organic.

Now souls, although they always remain isolated, are acted upon by the world and by other souls, and when so acted upon they yield an emotional response. And for the present purpose these actions may be divided into two classes, corresponding to the two classes of sympathetic nerve fibers—vaso-constrictor and vaso-dilator—which control the vascular system, the rougher daily contacts of life, which contract though they strengthen the soul with their legacy of strong desires and griefs, and the incomparably rarer contacts at which the soul for a while and in varying degrees expands with a glad sense of freedom. As every bodily change in the compacted soul is correlated with a mental change, these responses may be spoken of indifferently in mental or material terms. We know that they are on the bodily side vasomotorial; that a thrill of

joy is accompanied by a change in arterial tension, and we can therefore use this expression of the part as the symbol of the whole. It is this enlarged diastole of the soul that we call *religion*.

"The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual,—namely, to You." From the religious standpoint this is essentially true. The soul is situated at the center of the world, exposed to a practically infinite number of appeals, to which it is capable of yielding a practically infinite number of responses or initiations. Every moment a stream of influences is striking against the soul and producing a multitudinous stream of responses, new stops growing, as it were, beneath the player's touch. We know that for the most part the harsh and jarring discords predominate, that a soul that answers to the world's touch with a music that is ever large and harmonious, is so rare that we call it by some divine ideal word. Yet the field of the soul's liberation is a large one, whether we look at it on the physical or on the mental side. The simplest functions of physiological life may be its ministers. Every one who is at all acquainted with the Persian mystics, knows how wine may be regarded as an instrument of religion. Indeed, in all countries and in all ages, some form of physical enlargement—singing, dancing, drinking, sexual excitement—has been intimately associated with worship.



Even the momentary expansion of the soul in laughter is, to however slight an extent, a religious exercise. I do not fear to make this assertion; the expansions of the soul differ indefinitely in volume and quality. If this is but a low rung of the ladder along which pass the angels of our gladness, at the other end is that vision of divine self-sacrifice, so marked in the more highly developed religions, which has sustained through sorrow and defeat some of the world's loftiest spirits. They differ, as much as we will, in degree, but between them what hint by which to draw a line? Whenever an impulse from the world strikes against the organism, and the resultant is not discomfort or pain, not even the muscular contraction of strenuous manhood, but a joyous expansion or aspiration of the whole soul—there is religion. It is the infinite for which we hunger, and we ride gladly on every little wave that promises to bear us towards it.<sup>1</sup>

When we try to classify the chief of these affections of the soul according to the impulses

<sup>1</sup> It may be said that religion, as even the etymology of the word witnesses, has been a force on the side of repression. That also is true; it cannot indeed be too strongly emphasized. Only in the strength of that joyous expansion could men have acted and suffered such intolerable torture in the service of religion. (It must be remembered, however, that in certain stages of civilization religion is largely identified with morality.) It is necessary to generalize from the most various and highly specialized cases in order to arrive at a reasonable definition.

that arouse them, we find that they may be conveniently divided into four classes:—(1.) Those caused by the liberation of impulses stored up in the soul. (2.) Those caused by impulses from other souls. (3.) Those caused by impulses from the world, as distinct from souls. (4.) Those caused by an intuition of union with the world.

(1.) Here we are, above all, concerned with art. It is not necessary here to distinguish between the emotion of the artist and that of him who merely follows the artist, passing his hand as it were over the other's work, and receiving, in a less degree it may be, the same emotion. We are all artists potentially. The secret of the charm of art is that it presents to us an external world which is manifestly of like nature with the soul. "*Non merita nome di Creatore,*" according to Tasso's saying, "*se non Iddio ed il Poeta.*" The work of art—poem, statue, music—succeeds in being what every philosophy attempts to be. Neither change nor death can touch it; also it is immeasurable; we feel that we are in the presence of the infinite. No art has ever succeeded in embodying those visions of the infinite which are commonly regarded as specifically religious—so that even to-day we respond with a thrill of dilatation—as the old fragmentary art of Egypt in the ruined temples of the Thebaid. Greek art, also, is a manifestation of the infinite; we may lose ourselves among those subtle curves of man's or

woman's body. A Gothic cathedral of the thirteenth century is an embodiment of the infinite world itself. The soul responds expansively to all these things. When that response is wanting, and the art therefore, however interesting, is not religious—as in the art of Pompeii and the Italian post-Raphaelite art—it will generally be found technically inferior. The subject, one may note, has little or nothing to do with the matter. A representation of God the Father rarely evokes any religious response. De Hoope, by means of mere sunlight and the rubbish of a back-yard, awakes in us an enlarging thrill of joy. In music the most indefinite and profound mysteries of the soul are revealed and placed outside us as a gracious and marvelous orb; the very secret of the soul is brought forth and set in the audible world. That is why no other art smites us with so powerfully religious an appeal as music; no other art tells us such old forgotten secrets about ourselves.

“O! what is this that knows the road I came?”

It is in the mightiest of all instincts, the primitive sexual traditions of the races before man was, that music is rooted.

There are perhaps two instincts, a motor and a sensory, lying at the bottom of art and the delight in art. All the constructive instincts of living things, from bees and ants and worms and birds upwards, have gone to mold our de-

light in the fashioning of a whole, and in the contemplation of its fashion. The same process was carried on into human life. The primitive potter who took clay and wrought with her hands, and dented with her nails, the cup or pot or jar, wrought it through long ages ever more lovely and perfect, embodying therein all that she knew of the earth's uses and saw of its beauty, and by a true instinct she called her work a living creature. The baskets that early men wove, and the weapons that they carved for themselves, and their rhythmical cries in war-dance or worship, are part of a chain that presents itself again in Gothic cathedrals or Greek and Elizabethan dramas.

Even stronger than this motor instinct of art is the sensory delight in beauty which has its root in the attraction of sex. Not indeed the only root; all the things in the world that give light and heat and food and shelter and help gather around themselves some garment of loveliness, and so become the stuff of art; the sun and the reindeer are among the very first things to which men tried to give artistic expression. But the sexual instinct is more poignant and overmastering, more ancient than any as a source of beauty. Color and song and strength and skill—such are the impressions that male and female have graved on each other's hearts in their moments of most intense emotional exaltation. Their reflections have been thrown on the whole world. When the

youth awakes to find a woman is beautiful, he finds, to his amazement, that the world also is beautiful. Who can say in what lowly organism was stored the first of those impressions of beauty, the reflections of sexual emotion, to which all creators of beauty—whether in the form of the Venus of Milo, the Madonna di San Sisto, Chopin's music, Shelley's lyrics—can always appeal, certain of response? One might name finally as the highest, most complex summit of art reached in our own time—a summit on which art is revealed in its supreme religious form—Wagner's "Parsifal." These things sprang from love, as surely as the world would have been wellnigh barren of beauty had the sexual method of reproduction never replaced all others. Beauty is the child of love; the world, at least all in it worth living for, was the creation of love.

Yet another art, more subtle and complex, has played a large part in the history of religion—the art of metaphysic. The savage finds religious gratification in the exercise of his coarser senses, in singing or dancing or drinking; the man of large and refined intellectual development, a Plato, a Spinoza, a Kant, finds it in philosophy. Such men, indeed, are few, but by force of intelligence they have been enabled to thrust their pictures of the world on inferior minds; their arts have become articles. But every man who has reached the stage of development in which he can truly experience

the joy of the philosophic emotion will construct his own philosophy. A philosophy is the house of the mind, and no two philosophies can be alike because no two minds are alike. But the emotion is the same, the emotion of expansive joy in a house not built with hands, in which the soul has made for herself a large and harmonious dwelling.

(2.) It is true that souls remain for ever apart. The lover seeks to be absorbed altogether in the heaven of the loved personality, but in the end the heaven remains unscaled.

*“Adfigunt avidæ corpus junguntque salivas  
oris et inspirant pressantes dentibus ora,  
nequiquam.”*

And yet a large or lovely personality is not the less an outlook towards the infinite. We cannot think of certain men of immense range or power or sweetness—St. Francis, Leonardo, Napoleon, Darwin—without experiencing a movement of liberation. To pronounce the names of such men is of the nature of an act of worship. I cannot for a moment think of Shakespeare without a thrill of exultation at such gracious plenitude of power. No person, probably, ever made so ardent a personal appeal to men as Jesus. He discovered a whole new world of emotional life, a new expansion of joy, a kingdom in which slave and harlot took precedence of priest and king. To the men for whom that new emotional world was fresh and

living, torture and shame and death counted as nothing beside so large a possession of inward gladness. The weakest and lowest became heroes and saints in the effort to guard a pearl of so great price. There are few more inspiring figures in the history of man than the white body of the slave-girl Blandina, that hung from the stake day after day with the beasts in the amphitheater at Lyons, torn and bleeding, yet, *instar generosi cujusdam athletæ*, with the undying cry on her lips, *Christiana sum!* It is open to every one to give liberating impulses to his fellows. It is the distinction of Jesus that he has, for us, permanently expanded the bounds of individuality. We all breathe deeper and freer because of that semi-ideal carpenter's son. "*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili,*" said the physician in the old story, by the bedside of a wretched patient. "*Non est corpus tam vile pro quo mortuus est Christus,*" unexpectedly returned the dying man. The charm of Jesus can never pass away when it is rightly apprehended.

But it is not alone the large mystery of exceptional personalities which calls out this response. To certain finely-tempered spirits no human thing is too mean to fail in making this emotional appeal. The chief religious significance of Walt Whitman lies in his revelation of the emotional value of the entire common human personality and all that belongs to it. The later Athenians (as also Goethe) placed

above all things the harmonious development of the individual in its higher forms. It still remained to show the loveliness of the complete ordinary personality. Whitman's "Song of Myself" cannot in this respect be over-estimated.<sup>1</sup>

(3.) There is a religion of science. It is

<sup>1</sup> The late William Cycles, in his charming and neglected *magnum opus*, "The Process of Human Experience" (p. 462), rightly traces this form of religion to the feeling generated between lovers, friends, parent and children. "A few have at intervals walked in the world," he adds, "who have, each in his own original way, found out this marvel. . . . It has proved sufficient for them even to wish enough to help their race; instantly these secret delights have risen in their hearts. Straightway man in general has become to them so sweet a thing that the infatuation has seemed to the rest of their fellows to be a celestial madness. Beggars' rags to their unhesitating lips grew fit for kissing, because humanity had touched the garb; there were no longer any menial acts, but only welcome services. It was the humblest, the easiest, the readiest of duties to lay down life for the ignorant, the ill-behaved, the unkind,—for any and all who did but wear the familiar human shape. That this ecstasy of humanity should rise so much higher than any other is according to the plain working of the law of accumulation of finer consciousness by complexity in the occasioning activity. Remember by how much man is the subtlest circumstance in the world; at how many points he can attach relationships; how manifold and perennial he is in his results. All other things are dull, meager, tame beside him. If the most part of us are only as dross to one another, in place of being of this priceless value, it can only be from the lack of mutual services among us. Without these how can we but want sufficient adaptiveness of mood,—how can we help groaning under the weight of instincts half organized or wholly unfulfilled?"



rarer than has sometimes been supposed, and among men of science, probably, it is seldom found. Strauss's "Old Faith and New" is one of the chief attempts by a man of science to present the scientific attitude as food for the religious consciousness. The result is dreary in the extreme, in the end almost ludicrous. Herbert Spencer's attitude towards the Unknowable is a distinct though faint approximation to the religious relationship. Positivism, with its quasi-scientific notions, was founded on a curiously narrow conception of the nature of religion, and its religious sterility is probably inevitable. The man of science has little to do with magnificent generalizations; he is concerned chiefly with the patient investigation of details; it is but rarely that he feels called upon, like Kepler or Newton, for any emotional response to the grandeur and uniformity of law. Yet to many this vision of universal law has come as a light moving over chaos, a glad new discovery of the vastness and yet the homeliness of the world.

An esthetic emotion is not necessarily religious, even within the field of inanimate nature. So also the elusive tints, the subtle perfumes of things, so far from liberating the soul, may excite a tormenting desire to grasp and appropriate what is so lovely and so intangible. Still, there is a distinct class of emotions aroused by nature which is of the religious order. A large expanse of air or sea or undu-

lating land, or the placid infinity of the star-lit sky, seems necessary to impart that enlarging and pacifying sense of nature alike to poets and peasants. Some sight or sound of nature, either habitually, or under some special conditions in the percipient, may strike upon the soul and liberate it at once from the bonds of commonplace actuality. Perhaps no modern man has better expressed the religious aspects of nature than Thoreau. Of the American wood-thrush Thoreau can rarely speak without using the language of religion. "All that was ripest and fairest in the wilderness and the wild man is preserved and transmitted to us in the strain of the wood-thrush. . . . Whenever a man hears it, he is young, and Nature is in her spring. Wherever he hears it, there is a new world and a free country, and the gates of heaven are not shut against him. Most other birds sing, from the level of my ordinary cheerful hours, a carol, but this bird never fails to speak to me out of an ether purer than that I breathe, of immortal vigor and beauty." Generally, however, this emotion appears to be associated, not so much with isolated beautiful objects, as with great vistas in which beauty may scarcely inhere—

"all waste

And solitary places; where we taste  
The pleasure of believing what we see  
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be."

It is indeed myself that I unconsciously project into the large and silent world around me; the exhilaration I feel is a glad sense of the vast new bounds of my nature. That is why, at the appearance of another human being, I sink back immediately into the limits of my own normal individuality. I am no longer conterminous with the world around me; I cannot absorb or control another individuality like my own. I become a self-conscious human being in the presence of another self-conscious human being.

(4.) The supreme expression of the religious consciousness lies always in an intuition of union with the world, under whatever abstract or concrete names the infinite not-self may be hidden. The perpetual annunciation of this union has ever been the chief gladness of life. It comes in the guise of a *κάθαρσις* of egoism, a complete renunciation of the limits of individuality—of all the desires and aims that seem to converge in the single personality—and a joyous acceptance of what has generally seemed an immense external Will, now first dimly or clearly realized. In every age this intuition has found voice—voice that has often grown wild and incoherent with the torrent of expansive emotion that impelled it. It is this intuition which is the “emptiness” of Láo-tsze, the freedom from all aims that center in self: “It is only by doing nothing that the kingdom can be made one’s own.” This is the great good news

of the Upanishads: the *âtman*, the soul, may attain to a state of *yoga*, of union, with the supreme *âtman*; free, henceforth, from doubts and desires which pass over it as water passes over the leaf of the lotus without wetting it; acting, henceforth, only as acts the potter's wheel when the potter has ceased to turn it: "If I know that my own body is not mine, and yet that the whole earth is mine, and again that it is both mine and thine—no harm can happen then." The Buddhist's Nirvana, whether interpreted as a state to be attained before or after death, has the same charm; it opens up the kingdom of the Universe to man; it offers to the finite a home in the infinite. This is the great assertion of Christ, "I and my Father are one"; and whenever Christianity has reached its highest expression, from Paul's day to our own, it has but sung over again the old refrain of joy at the "new birth" into eternal life—the union, as it is said, of the soul through Christ with God—a tender Father, a great sustaining Power on which the soul may rest and be at peace:

"E la sua volontade è nostra pace."

And that again is but in another form the Sufism of Jelal-ed-din—the mystic union of the human bridegroom with the Divine Bride. Even the austere Imperial Stoic becomes lyrical as this intuition comes to him: "Everything is

harmonious with me which is harmonious to thee, O Universe!" As far back as we can trace, the men of all races, each in his own way and with his own symbols, have raised this shout of exultation. There is no larger freedom for man.

It seemed well to name at least the chief implications contained in a broadly generalized statement of man's religious relation to the universe. It is important to remember that they are but an individual mode of representation. I can only say that I am conscious of myself in varying attitudes of relations. The terms of those relationships, stated with however much probability, will ever remain matter for dispute. Moreover, various attitudes reveal various metaphysical implications.

The scientific attitude, for example, has a series of implications of its own. In its solvents all things are analyzed and atomized; the "soul" of our religious world—the vast pulsating center, at the bottom of which, according to the profound saying of the old mystic, lies that unutterable sigh which we call God—is resolved into a momentary focus of ever-shifting rays of force; it is but an incident in a huge evolution of shifting forces which we may, if we like, personify as Nature, but which, none the less, we cannot conceive as a whole. The scientific attitude has its own implications,

and their far-reaching significance, their immense value for the individual and for the race, can scarcely be overrated.

Again, the moral attitude is equally distinct. The criminal after a successful piece of villainy may feel a thrill of ecstasy. It is indeed well known that criminals in every country are the children of (more or less superstitious) religion. We may regard morality as grounded in the sense of personality, gradually extending by imagination and sympathy to every individual. Or we may regard it as springing, in a sense of adhesiveness, from the family and resulting relationships, and thence growing into a consciousness of the oneness of all human interests, the individuals finding themselves to be, according to that Stoic conception which has molded European laws and is still a leavening influence in European ethics, members one with another in the same natural body of humanity. In any case, as a moral being the individual finds himself dependent on other individuals, and with a duty, therefore, laid upon him to live harmoniously with those individuals; there being no response forthcoming to the demands of his own nature unless he also responds to the demands of other natures. Religion, however, knows nothing of the scientific "nature" or of the ethical "man"; its impulse is from within and of free grace.

At the dawn of civilization, it is true, religion and morals are inextricably mingled;

they only become disentangled by a gradual evolution. The Toda who regards as sacred an ancient cattle-bell is obeying an impulse of adoration whose foundation is, probably, largely ethical, for the bull is intimately connected with the beginnings of civilization. A religious impulse will sometimes have an ethical element; morals will sometimes find an ally in religion. But religion with its internal criterion and morals with its more external criterion remain essentially distinct, sometimes antagonistic: "to reject religion," Thoreau said, "is the first step towards moral excellence." That is but a puny religion that is based on morals; on the other hand, the morals that rests on religion will sooner or later collapse with it in a common ruin. That has been too often seen. Religions change: every man is free to have his own, or to have none. No man, scarcely even a Crusoe, is free to have no morals, and the ideal morality cannot widely vary for any two societies.

Yet religion cannot live nobly without science or without morals. It is only by a strenuous devotion to science, by a perpetual reference to the moral structure of life, that religion—so made conscious of its nature and its limits—can be rendered healthful.

"None can usurp this height . . .

But those to whom the miseries of the world  
Are misery, and will not let them rest;"

so spake Moneta to Keats, among all English poets the purest artist.

A man takes sides with religion, or with science, or with morals; oftener he spends the brief moments of his existence in self-preservation, fighting now on one side, now on the other. But for a little while we are allowed to enter the house of life and to gather around its fire. Why pull each other's hair and pinch each other's arms like naughty children? Well would it be to warm ourselves at the fire together, to clasp hands, to gain all the joy that comes of comradeship, before we are called out, each of us, into the dark, alone.

The other elements fall away from religion, leaving the emotional, deeper and more fundamental than either of the others; just as the brain itself is controlled by the sympathetic system which outlives it and holds in its hands the centers of life. That element underlay the crude imaginings of the primitive man who first created a spiritual world out of the stuff of his dreams and his primitive delight in the most marvelous object he saw, the sun, that as he truly divined is the source not only of light but of life; just as it underlies also our more complex imaginings to-day. In religion, we are appealing not to any narrow or superficial element of the man, but to something which is more primitive than the intellectual efflorescence of the brain, the central fire of life itself.

Our supreme business in life—not as we



made it, but as it was made for us when the world began—is to carry and to pass on as we received it, or better, the sacred lamp of organic being that we bear within us. Science and morals are subservient to the reproductive activity; that is why they are so imperative. The rest is what we will, play, art, consolation—in one word, religion. If religion is not science or morals, it is the sum of the unfettered expansive impulses of our being. Life has been defined as, even physically and chemically, a tension. All our lives long we are struggling against that tension, but we can truly escape from it only by escaping from life itself. Religion is the stretching forth of our hands toward the illimitable. It is an intuition of the final deliverance, a half-way house on the road to that City which we name mysteriously Death.

**THE END**





